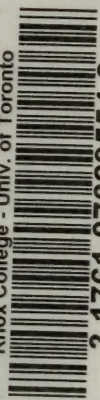


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ANCESTRAL VOICES

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WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

IF GOD BE FOR US

THE WINDS OF GOD

ANCESTRAL VOICES

BY

JOHN A. HUTTON, D.D.

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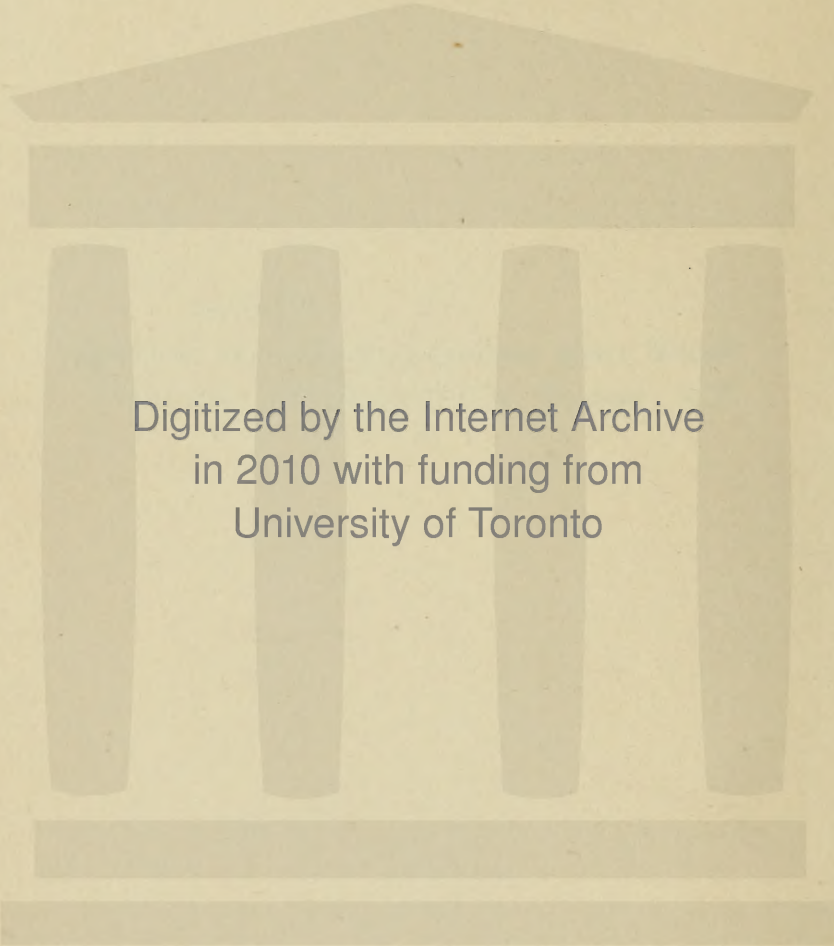
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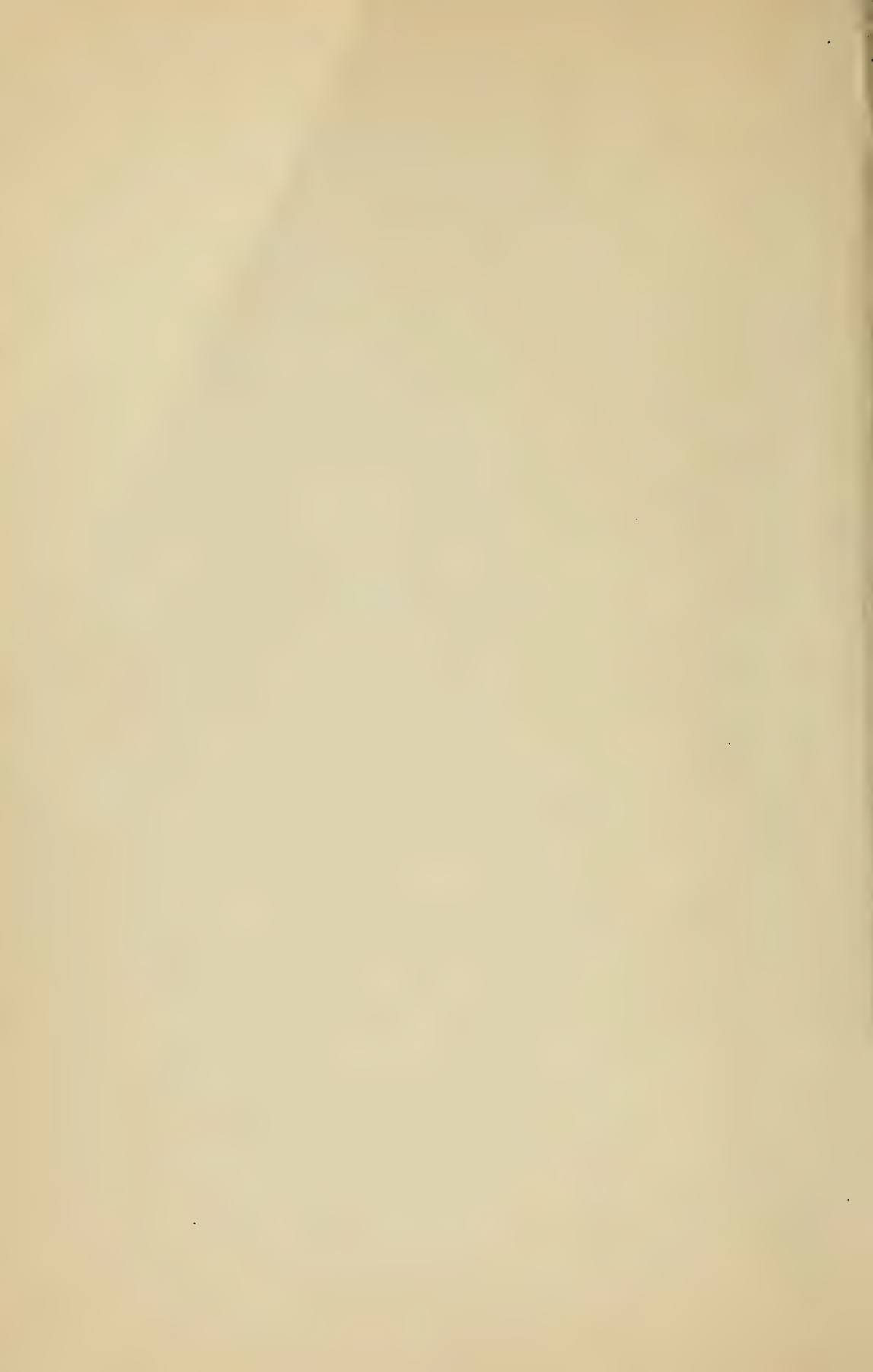
"Priests

Should study passion; how else cure mankind,
Who come for help in passionate extremes?"



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TO A
DEAR FRIEND
F. A. A.



PREFATORY NOTE

THE title is taken from a line in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, and itself suggests much of what lies behind this volume of essays.

Coleridge wrote, "Ancestral voices prophesying war." The thesis underlying these essays might be put in this way: the nature of man, especially of the man of Western civilisation, has, on the whole, taken form. There is in him—the fruit of his long physical and historical travail—an invincible core of wisdom and final prejudice, and any invasion of his catholic human nature, man as an individual and in societies inevitably rises to repel.

The book, therefore, may help serious people to perceive that what we are beholding in this terrible time is a conflict between the Ancestral Voices of the soul and a merely rationalistic and temporary way of conceiving man's true

function in this world ; and that the darkness which is meanwhile over the world is the protest of man's established and universal nature against a proposed sectional tyranny.

OGSCASTLE,

CARNWATH, *September* 1915.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFATORY NOTE	ix
I. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY—SO FAR	I
II. IS AN AGE OF FAITH RETURNING?	18
III. THE CRY FOR FREEDOM—NIETZSCHE	40
IV. THE CRY FOR CONTROL—TRACTARIANISM	71
V. TERTIUM QUID: THE MESSAGE OF G. K. CHESTERTON	95
VI. FIVE PAPERS ON "THE SENSE OF SIN IN GREAT LITERATURE"—	
Introductory	131
1. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"	141
2. "Peer Gynt"	158
3. "La Morte"	178
4. The Redemption of our Solitude (Dostoi- evsky, Tolstoy, Shaw)	203
5. Here and There	224
VII. IS HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?—"JULIAN THE APOSTATE": A PARALLEL	239
EPILOGUE	262

I

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY—SO FAR

TO write just now about the twentieth century is as unseasonable a task as it would be to write down one's impressions of a voyage a few days out at sea—wild weather, the ship mounting and yawing, and oneself so mixed up in the cosmical business as not to be very well.

I can, however, make a beginning, in the only stable region that is left to us meanwhile—the region of my memory. I can recall quite definitely some of the circumstances of my own mind in the months immediately preceding the outbreak of war. I had just finished reading a book by Holbrook Jackson, entitled *The Eighteen Nineties*, in which, whether the writer intended such an inference or not, one was permitted to see, in the light of certain pathetic and terrible examples, the failure and inevitable nausea of

naturalism as a formula for life or for art. It was like the reading of a tragedy. Those young bloods set out into life, one and all, as though there were no laws, no nature of things; and one by one they ran their heads against one or other of those stone walls which are there—the rude precaution of society, or the more delicate embarrassment of God, for the defence of some final decency. They all went to the Devil or returned to God; and these last, with an abjectness and confusion of the soul which, I believe, must have mixed with grief God's joy at their return. One went mad, one died in prison, and another made a clutch at God as he was slipping out of life, with a cry as much of indignation and despair as of faith. "I implore you," wrote Aubrey Beardsley on his death-bed, "to destroy all copies of — and bawdy drawings. Show this to — (naming a friend), and conjure him to do same. By all that is holy, all obscene drawings." And the words, "in my death-agony," were added after his signature.

All this, coupled with a similar wave of reaction in France, and anticipated in classical statements in the profound psychological work of Tolstoy

—(all this) meant for me that there is a way by which we human beings must go, and it is, on the whole, the way by which we have come. And so, eight months ago my working formula for the Church would have been, that we should simply sit still, that we should be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that we should bide our time, leaving it to certain invincible forces working subtilly in the depths of men's souls, to lay them open to the revenge and indignation of something deep and holy. It seemed to me then, and it seems to me still, that the churches with a future are the churches with a high threshold; that when the day comes for any general movement towards faith amongst the people, they will be attracted, not by appeals which are easy and obvious, but by appeals which are exacting and mysterious, having as little as possible in common with the standards of value which please men in the days of the flesh.

Something of the same kind of solution of what is called "the Social Problem" was the best I had to offer myself. Every thinking man must have in imagination some way out of the troubles which are threatening. And that was

my way out. Having spent the most real part of my own life amongst the poor,—not so much amongst the high-wage-earners, who are remarkably disregardful of the poor,—so that to this day I can speak their dialect and think their thoughts, I know how they resent the persistent effort to do them good in an external way, and how they are alienated from those who appear to think that it is impossible to live properly in their circumstances. I know how they understand and are always the better for brotherliness and love and a common laughter; how they suspect and are immediately on guard against any attempt to deal with them in the name of a theory, and how they justify themselves in exploiting such helpers and reformers.

There is a fine passage in the speech of Dostoievsky in 1881 at Moscow, at the unveiling of a memorial to Pushkin, in which he works out my idea; how the poor say to us, “If you *will* love me, you must love *mine*”:—you must love the things I love: you must come to me in the midst of these, so that if I should ever leave them for other conditions, it will be in obedience to some new desire; and when I do leave them, it will be with respect and sorrow. And so, for

myself, I have never lost the faith that—to put the matter in an illustration—one day a voice will break out at a mass meeting and will cry, “When are you going to stop speaking to us about our interests ; when are you going to stop speaking to us as children, or rather as atheists or machines ? When are you so-called leaders going to speak to us in the name of something which rebukes us ? When are you going to speak to us as to men who have their own hours of bad conscience and secret shame ? ”

That was my way out : that here and there would arise out of the masses of the people humble men who should overthrow the present bitterness, not by the spirit of revolt, but by an overflowing and intolerable happiness of the soul. The entrance of “Russia” will contribute to this.

All this is to say that had I been writing last July of the twentieth century from the point of view of the interest of serious and forecasting men, I should have set myself to detect and pursue here and there indications of a spirit of reaction, of fatigue, of caution, of wisdom, settling down—in the first instance—upon guiding and eminent minds. I should have dwelt

upon that as a sign of the turn of the tide of naturalism, as the confession by unprejudiced explorers that out there in the darkness things are as they always were, that the deep souls in all ages were right. Indeed, my own forecast at the time—and it may be that later events have made it a still more likely one—was, that the danger which lay ahead of us was not the danger of any general movement towards atheism or denial, but rather of a movement in sensitive and religious spirits towards something in the way of religion, outwardly more unanimous and undisturbed and mysterious, even more tyrannical than anything we exhibit, who in a day of darkness may seem to souls in flight to be ourselves too restless and insecure. What I foresaw then was a stampede, in which the one cry should be for shelter.

All that was—before the Flood: and yet it may very well be that this break-down of civilisation may force men in masses to the very conclusions and solutions which were already offering themselves to, we might even say tempting, finer minds. There is a real danger that *intelligence* in matters of religion may for a long time be disparaged, and that in the panic over the alleged collapse of the secular reason we may all be

borne beyond a proper faith, into credulity and superstition. Such an anti-cyclone in the general atmosphere would be a sinister thing, and lead later on to another storm. And yet something of the kind will almost inevitably happen: there will be a suspicion of mere enlightenment, and the suspicion once aroused may go to all lengths. It will be for convinced and manly men to take a firm hold of the situation, and to deal closely and ruthlessly with the misgivings of the time, acknowledging indeed that we live by faith, but protesting at the same time that we live by a faith which stands to reason.

There is a charge which one already hears, which we shall probably hear more and more—from outsiders: the charge, namely, that the present break-down is a reproach to Christianity; in the sense that it is due to the failure of Christianity. We must at once secure the general currency of a contradiction to such a charge. It ought not to be difficult to let the masses of the people see that this break-down in civilisation is due first and last, in its principles and in its processes, to the neglect, and indeed to the explicit repudiation, of the entire body of ideas, and warnings, and motives, and beliefs,—ideas concerning human

nature, and the nature of things—which came into the conscience of the world with Jesus, a body of ideas and beliefs for the obedience to which He laid down His life, and for the propagation of which He attached some men to His side and appealed to them never to let them die.

The present collapse of civilisation, the present “failure of knowledge,” may on the contrary present a temptation to preachers and teachers. It will be hard for us to resist the inclination to say “I told you so,” and not to adopt contemptuous references to the “so-called twentieth century.”

And yet it would be wrong to let the occasion pass without a sober and persistent claim on the part of the Church of Christ, that the whole tragedy has come about, first and last, because of the neglect or denial of the Christian view of God and the world. For, whatever more we are to learn from this eruption of natural force through the heart of man, which is raging about us like a sea of fire, already surely we have learned that we had all fallen into a way of dealing with ourselves and with life which, we see now, fails utterly face to face with man in his heights and

depths. The fact is, we of this generation for the first time are in a position to understand Christianity and the great insights which Christianity has registered in its doctrines concerning God and man. We are beginning to understand Christianity in the only way in which you can understand anything, namely, by perceiving the kind of thing this life of ours would be were Christianity even now to fail. We have been taught the nature of things in the only way in which people can be taught the nature of things, and that is by seeing things running loose for a time.

“Life and death,” says Paulsen, “are the great preachers.” No man by searching can find out God, or truth. No argument could ever have led our age to believe, or even to suspect, that human nature when it escapes from the shadow of God is as wild as it ever was. That man by nature is wild, that man by nature is simply a bit of nature, and liable to behave like an earthquake or like a tidal wave, or like a wild beast in some functional ecstasy (to adopt an illustration from one of those gentle German writers)—how were ideas of that kind ever to be brought home to us, and how, even if their likelihood had been established in

reason, could they have been made effective for the rebuke of man's headlongness?

We had all allowed ourselves to suppose that knowledge, increased amenities, *savoir-faire*, would soften and tame the primitive passions. We see now that we had no reason to think that knowledge and social amenities would have such an influence. We know that knowledge by itself does not make us less selfish or less determined to have our own way, or less churlish if someone gets in front of us. We know that something must take place within us, which is more like crucifixion than anything we can think of, before we ourselves gain a clean victory over some ugly passion or temper. We had no reason whatever to suppose that Europe could for fifty years be steadily undermining the fabric of Christianity in societies, and laying base insinuations all about the roots of the human soul, and yet at the same time would have the power, or would have the wish, to rebuke the ancient lust of the eye, and restrain the ancient pride of life. What has happened in our day is simply this: we are seeing what life ought to be, and what it must be, if the great things that Christ means are not true and are not felt to be necessary. For until

a thing is felt to be necessary it is not believed in : for we believe not with our heads, but most frequently by the help of a shudder passing over us at the prospect of the alternative. What we are seeing to-day is perhaps (since the time of Julian) the first organised and reasoned repudiation of the mind of Christ concerning the nature of true goodness. And the darkness which has come over the whole earth is once again the protest of the wider order against a local and temporary blasphemy.

From this point of view it may be that we are approaching a new dawn, though here I should like to say that I cannot imagine more mischievous language than men are already beginning to use, such as that "this terrible time is *bound* to do good." Still, I believe the very depth of the darkness which has fallen upon the modern world will lead the soul of man in our day, and in our children's day, back to humility and faith. We are so made that we do not see things until they are gone from us. We know nothing about ourselves until we have found ourselves out. We were all too secure to feel our need of God. What errors certainly we had fallen into—what assurance, what pride, what dullness towards the

very religion we profess! How we had come to look upon faith in Christ as something which a man might have or might not have: that it depended largely upon his temperament or upon his reading! How little we understood that faith in Christ is an absolute necessity if human existence is to remain sane and not a contradiction in terms!

This leads me to two points with which I may deal and conclude. I should have liked to speak of the change in the education of children and young people which is likely to follow—the total change and contradiction even, if Germany were to win, or were so much as to score a draw. One sees at a glance how totally diverse the ideas of the training of young people must be if we believe that the ideal is a final brotherhood of nations, and that there is a Power higher than the power of the State, call it humanity, call it God (one sees at a glance how totally diverse the ideas of the training of young people, *i.e.* the function of our schools and colleges, must be), from those which will be in vogue if it be established by the brutal fact and issue that those nations have the best chance to survive which are organised to create terror. Leaving that, however, there are some things which the present

darkness has made visible to me. What nonsense we used to talk when we said "that it did not matter so much what a man believed, that the great thing was to live well"! We had the tiresome contrast between creed and conduct, a contrast which I have no doubt had at one time a moral value, in a community, for example, in which the traditional faith had never been disturbed; but a contrast which had no sense whatever, and might easily become the minister of evil in a community which was only too ready to hear that the delicate barriers of the soul had no sanction in God, that those high doctrines concerning God and man, concerning Guilt and the difficulty of forgiveness, were no longer so sure, that, in fact, "they didn't know everything down in Judee"!

And now, in the midst of all this palaver, the world has gone wild, has broken loose. And where has it broken loose? Through what sluice-gate has the black flood poured? Through what bulwark, ruined now, and shattered, and undermined? Simply for this reason, namely—*Europe to-day is not unanimous about God.* It is without any Decisive and Implacable sense of—the Nature of God. We are at war to-day

because we are not at one as to the Nature of God. That is why this is, in its essence, a Holy War. The Kaiser quite sincerely invokes a God who to us is the Devil. The fact is, that the fight to-day is for the Homooousion: and it is the only controversy for which a nation does well to pour out its blood.

There are two things then, which, in the thick darkness that is over the whole earth, I seem to see standing out in a white light.

In the first place, I can see now, with the entire assent of my mind, how the Church was led by the pressure of circumstances which will always recur, circumstances which spring from the very nature of human beings—their subtilty, their self-seeking, their ingenuity for giving fine names and discovering fine reasons for ideas and ambitions which they happen to be passionately bent upon;—I can see how the Church was led to define the Nature of God, to define the essence and moral quality of the Great Power behind all things, and to say explicitly that, for the Church, the character of God is *Christ*. For the name of God—in the sense of the Inscrutable and Infinite Power behind all Creation—is a name which may be invoked by any audacious

and sanguine human being. It is simply a "Graven Image" of the Ineffable. A man's appropriation of the name of God may simply mean that he himself is passionately persuaded of his cause, and that he anticipates great difficulties.

But the name of Christ is a name which no one can invoke with any reality if the cause for which he invokes that name is a cause which cannot be made to look harmonious with the Mind of Christ. It may very well be that the word GOD is a word which, for a generation or two, we ought to abandon. It is a heathen word, *i.e.* a purely human and natural word, and it has for the time being lost its baptismal grace. By itself it has no more moral or intellectual content than the symbol "x."

The word God is not our characteristic word. And I can now well imagine the circumstances in which St. Paul broke out with words which have in our day an extraordinary freshness and urgency: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to *us* there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ,

through whom are all things, and we through Him."

The second thing which I see with greater clearness in the darkness is this: that the only just war that a nation can engage in, is a war of ultimate ideas, a religious war. It was another of the foolish things we used to say in the day of our deadness and security: we used to turn up our eyes and say how wrong and sinful it was for people to fight about religion. We see now that there is nothing else for which a nation must honourably contend. Nations have fought for territory, for trade, for revenge: and these were mean struggles. But to fight for an idea about all life, to fight for an interpretation of human nature, to fight for the very definition of God,—a matter, *i.e.*, of such a kind that, if we triumph, our children and our children's children shall be with us in life and in death and after death; and if we fail, our children and our children's children must reject our testimony, and make for some strange fierce heaven—to fight for the true nature of man, and of society, and of God,—what else did we come into this world for? For what is it "to fight," except "to suffer"?

That is not a proper contrast which we draw

between War and Peace. There is no necessary contradiction between War and Peace. The real contradiction is between WRONG and PEACE. In a world, the heart of which is good, and good in the sense in which we say that Christ is good—in such a world there is no enduring peace, nor even the beginning of peace, except by the way of a common acknowledgment of what God is: “And for us there is but one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ.”

II

IS AN AGE OF FAITH RETURNING ?

IT is Mr. Balfour, among those who in recent years have published their reflections upon the present situation, who observes that the great movements which history records have in every case been "irrational." They have come to life, not as the result of intellectual statement or appeal, but always in obedience to forces at first so obscure and in the day of their power so complicated and diverse, that it is impossible to isolate or name them or to relate them to man's average behaviour.

We may accept Mr. Balfour's generalisation as giving the impression which history makes upon a spectator, and, remembering the limitations of a spectator, as accurate,—that the more remarkable episodes and crises in human affairs have ever been "irrational." That, however, must not be held to mean that they occurred without reason ;

but only that they occurred in obedience to some force which was a new element in the particular age; a force therefore which, because it was new, did violence to the mental habits of the observers of that time. The fact is, there is something *irrational* in everything that *moves*. It moves, not for reasons that may be given, but in obedience to something more primitive and elementary. In the last analysis the force behind any movement is something which is "there." The movement is the expression of it, the sign of it, the opposition of life's ancient circumstances to it; but it itself is original, irrational, free. It is therefore no disparagement of a movement that it is irrational; for that is only to say that it is spontaneous, living—a new contribution to the sum of energy in the world. Great movements are irrational in the precise sense that every act of life is irrational; for every act of life is the expression of something which, in itself, has nothing to do with man's reasoning powers. "Rationality," in the restricted sense of the word, is as little the impulse or vital element in human affairs on any scale, as the rudder is the power which drives a ship through the water.

We shall return later to this point. Meanwhile,

let us consider some signs, as they seem to me to be, that a very great change is already beginning to take place in the public mind, one of those changes so obscure in its beginnings, so diverse in its fruits, so contemptuous of maxims which until yesterday appeared to be incontrovertible, that it may yet come to be included amongst movements which have that quality of "irrationality" which is the proof of a certain inevitableness and authenticity.

On the principle of the swing of the pendulum, we ought to anticipate a reaction against a mood which has dominated men during, to speak roughly, the last generation. It is possible, no doubt, to give an airy and cynical interpretation of this pendulum principle,—that it is due to the incurable levity of the public mind. But a more serious and honourable explanation is also competent. Any reaction which is widespread, and has the note of spontaneity, will be found to be the protest of man's entire nature against the arrogance and tyranny of one aspect or faculty of that nature. We have the instinct for freedom, for self-assertion; but—it may be a reminiscence in our blood, or it may be the calling and election of God—we have also the instinct to deal severely

with ourselves,—the instinct of obedience, of bondage. We *will* wander making our experiments in living ; but we *will* tire of our freedom, and become reverent, or even panic-stricken. There are signs, it seems to me, that men, in certain matters, are beginning to have misgivings, beginning to fear they have gone far enough ; signs of a certain timidity which will be condemned as weakness by some still strenuous minds, but which will be regarded by others as belonging equally to man's true nature, as the sign of his inevitable need of some shelter for his spirit. But, not to dwell longer upon the principle of the swing of the pendulum, though it is not to be neglected in any forecast of the public mood, it is possible to name certain misgivings and grounds of anxiety which supply the very condition for a total change in men's attitude towards life and affairs.

There is one circumstance which weighs upon the minds of serious observers who look forward, to which I shall barely, and even that with difficulty, allude. I refer to it at the present moment, because it also is a symptom of the absence in the general mind of some powerful and unquestioned rule or standard, which might help us in the lonely business of life. If statistics are

to be trusted, and certain ominous words spoken from time to time by those who are qualified to know, society to-day, almost from top to bottom, is trifling with certain natural duties and responsibilities in ways which we usually associate with the decadent days of Imperial Rome. If this be as is alleged, it means that with all our knowledge we are on the threshold of unworthy and threatening days. For my own part, I do not believe that a view of family life, which must always seem hideous to wholesome and unsophisticated minds, is about to take up a permanent place amongst us. But simply because this abandonment of natural life has its root and defence in personal selfishness, in love of ease and vanity ; and because, in such an atmosphere, vice of that kind seems not right indeed, but yet not terrible, I have no hope that it will be swept out of lives, except by the recovery of an instinct, in a wave of horror and indignation and revenge, such as is let loose by the vision of God. It is one of Pater's deep and beautiful insights, that the religion of Jesus, when it came home to the hearts of Roman ladies of patrician rank, brought with it a new reverence for the elementary conditions of life,

It would be an easy matter to name additional symptoms in the life and expression of our people, to show that we are living from hand to mouth, without the moral order and peace which come of obedience to some faith or vision. Education has brought no moral motive ; and we are beginning to see that it was idle to look for such motive in mere knowledge. The social question, likewise, is now beginning to be apprehended, even by those who at one time dreamed dreams of wholesale amelioration, as, when all is said, a moral question ; that without the socially regenerate man, the best conceived scheme will fail.

This same feeling—that meanwhile there is something awanting, something which in better days we and our fathers knew, something without which we are at a disadvantage—has become a real discovery in the Church. In the various denominations, this consciousness of inability, this sense at the same time of a completeness which nevertheless is possible, manifests itself in various ways. Ultimately there are only two attitudes which are possible to men in real distress—the Roman Catholic and the Reformed ; the one to give up the world, the other to call upon God. Every Church just now is living too much by its

wits. Never did men in office in the Church work harder. Never were they more willing to learn. Never were church buildings so constantly in use. Never were appeals more insistent. Yet at the best, "having done all, we stand." Such success as the Churches may claim is not of the highest possible quality ; it is too much fretted with anxiety and labour. It wants certain notes of peace, of fullness, of that confidence in God which has the victory over the world. It is not pregnant, overflowing. It has a basis of worry and strain. It has enough to do with itself.

I note these signs, not in order to disparage them, for, indeed, it may be that they were inevitable. I note them because there once again we encounter, and this, in the case of the most sensitive and potent people in our community, a condition of unstable equilibrium, of discord and uneasiness, of insecurity through which the secret yearning rises for that state of soul in which the strife is past. But what I wish to say about this present-day temper and outlook in the Churches is, that it is a condition of things which will not continue. It is a condition of things out of which an entirely new attitude and settlement may very suddenly take place. After all, the community is

the individual writ large. We know how, in the case of a man, there is a limit to the amount of worry and harassment which he will endure. A point is reached when he can worry no more. At that point he flings up his hands, in faith or in despair. Just so, the Church which has been subjected for many years to a strain in every region of its life comes to a point where it either loses heart and becomes a tame accessory to the general situation, or appeals from its own confessed failure and inability to the right hand of God.

Enough has been said to show that at this present time we have reached as a community that temper of unrest and misgiving,—having ideals which we will not abandon, which nevertheless we cannot fulfil ; depressed by the failure of mere knowledge to increase or even to sustain our moral energy ; suspicious of words and ideas which have had their turn and have failed ; and in all this the vague confidence that there is a more excellent way—the temper, in short, which itself is the invitation and prelude to a total change of attitude.

Certain as I am that as a community we shall get out of this condition of strain and confusion

somehow, I hold that already there are many signs that we are about to emerge on the honourable side of the morass.

It is one way of stating the terms of the controversy of the last fifty years, to say that it has been a battle between man and the universe, between man with his instinctive and traditional ideas of himself—his dignity, his significance on the one hand, and, on the other, the infinite world—nature, history, all things. Or, to use the familiar antithesis, it has been a conflict between faith and reason, between the heart and the head.

During the greater part of the struggle, the advantage lay with those forces which we gather together under the name of "science." This is not to be wondered at. Science was fresh, and much on the other side was indefensible. So far, no sensible or just man was alarmed. But the engagement proceeded. "Faith" seemed to be driven to her last ditch. But now, that is to say yesterday, when science, as it seemed, was about to deal the *coup de grâce*, her arm has grown heavy, and a look of anxiety has come into her hitherto bold countenance. Meanwhile "faith," taking advantage it may be of the signs of

weakness on the other side, or, it may be, summoning her last reserves, is manifesting such vitality that it is quite credible she may win back many a position; indeed, may win back more than she can safely hold. For every mood is absolute so long as it lasts; and, in such a conflict as we are speaking of, the situation at the last ditch is apt to decide the question everywhere. Without metaphor, it seems to me that man's "personality," which in reality was being threatened by the formulas and deductions of materialistic science, is showing signs of recovery; and, because the sense of personality once confirmed will proceed to claim its inherent rights, and at the further stage to take up its duties and responsibilities, the survival and reinforcement of personality is a conclusion which must be hailed with satisfaction by all who would not despair of the human enterprise.

In what remains of this paper, let me indicate some features in the mental situation, more or less public and apparent, which seem to me to mean that after a long period of depression, of low spirits, of a kind of shamefacedness and apology, the soul of man—man, *i.e.*, contrasted with his natural circumstances—is about to stand up; is

already, indeed, upon his feet, with something of the ancient daring in his eyes.

That the Christian Science propaganda should begin and should find such a welcome in an age and amongst habits of thought diametrically opposed to its ideas, is a shining illustration of how extremes meet. Sympathetically considered, also, it gives the rationale, the inner reasonableness, of that long-established maxim. Extremes meet for the same reason as tyrannies are overthrown. The latter extreme is the passionate reaction, often unjust and disastrous but inevitable, against the former. To the *ipse dixit* of materialism, becoming more and more strident and cocksure, that there is nothing but matter in the world, Christian science with equal self-confidence replies that there is nothing but spirit. Now, it is not the purpose of this paper to enter into proofs, or to justify the general movement, signs of which are here alleged. My purpose is simply to name some signs, as they seem to me, that, whether rightly or wrongly in an absolute sense, the general mind to-day is steadily inclining towards a certain considerateness and attitude of attention with regard to the spiritual view of man and the world.

The same interpretation may legitimately be given of the remarkable revival of the "occult" in our time. It is idle, it is simply not true, to say that this dabbling in the black arts is confined to those few queer people whom we shall always have with us, and that it is without significance. One has only to walk up and down a street in the busier part of any of our cities to see what a trade must be going on in the unseen and the diabolical. It may not be a comfortable sign; indeed, it points to a real peril which will accompany any wholesale return to faith, as it has accompanied every such instinctive and elementary movement in past times. But it is the sign, I believe, of a kind of wild revenge which the spiritual side of our human nature is celebrating as a protest against its long neglect. As such, it gives an insight into the necessities of human nature; that in the absence of the prophet from the soul, in the absence of some honourable faith, which will control the fluid and haunting faculties of man, there may take place, even in the most enlightened society, a kind of stampede into dark and dubious and imbecile things. By themselves, these things are disheartening and deplorable enough, but they are not by themselves. They

are rather like pieces of paper and bits of straw and clouds of dust blown about by a wind which, nevertheless, is a good enough wind, bearing ships out to sea and home.

I have already alluded, in a phrase, to the note of relenting, of misgiving and insecurity, which has come into the testimony of science on its speculative, or, so to call it, its metaphysical side. I think this much may be claimed by the so long hard-pressed camp of idealists, that science has been taught her place. To speak fairly, science has become sober and judicial, as is the way of youth always, not in deference to the advice of those who were alarmed by her recklessness, but by her own discoveries as she proceeded. Time is on the side of all the facts. It has become evident that when science leaves her sphere of criticism and observation, and presumes to unveil the last source or final purpose of things, she can only guess or talk nonsense. And it is very wonderful how widely that essential limitation of science has come to be known and understood by average people. Wonderful, too, is it, how commonly it is now understood that science, not one whit less than revelation, needs postulates, needs to create an atmosphere of hypothesis,

needs to make demands upon faith, in order to get even under way. That all her processes rest upon a credulity with regard to fundamental things, as thorough-going as is required by the twin-postulates of God and the soul. The serious banter of such books, to name but one, as Dr. Ward's *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, in which science will seem to fair-minded people to be hoist with its own petard, has found its way, and now serves as a caution in minds which formerly rioted in negative proofs. And such a state of things, because it raises a subtle barrier of scepticism against science whenever science seems to invade some ancient safeguard of man's peace, is a result which is already of great consequence for faith, and, in the event of any notable movement towards belief, will throw wide open many a door. It is an immense relief for some people to know, on the authority of university men, that one may believe in God, without being intellectually an ass.

You see symptoms of the same subtle difference of temper in contemporary philosophical writing. Here, very abundantly, you have signs that *man* is fast coming into his own again. Even a worm must turn if he would have his wrongs observed.

To a philosophy which had come to regard man as a mere article in the Inventory of the Universe, there has arisen amongst us a philosophy prepared to wait upon man, hoping to attain to wisdom by observing patiently and with reverence man's habitual and instinctive life. "Pragmatism," "soft determinism," "personal idealism" are but names for a new mood, a new point of view ; the one thing about which I desire at this time to note being, that it puts the accent and emphasis upon *man*. When one contrasts the idealistic philosophy of even twenty years ago with the writing which to-day, on the whole, occupies the same place in the intellectual field, one notes, I think above all other differences, a new robustness, a spirit of confidence, a certain glow and intoxication even, a zest for the battle, which were wanting from the earlier phase. Idealists to-day are very cheery persons. Rightly or wrongly, they feel that they have the ball at their foot. They are not ashamed at times to reply to an argument with a laugh or by telling a good story. When a controversialist on the other side has circumstantially demonstrated the intellectual impossibility of "believing," they will answer, as one did the other day, by protesting that, at the time of

writing, he is simply prancing with belief. In short, able men to-day have the hardihood to appeal from the sophistry of pure reason to the generous intimations of a healthy temperament. It may be very Philistine ; but it is very human. It is the true and only useful positivism. One thing is certain, it is there, cheerful and unashamed. It is one of those "irrational" movements, one of those "offences" against the pure reason "which must needs come," in which some elementary instinct or function, long denied, finds at length its voice, and utters its uncontrollable joy. For, as Caponsacchi said : "A man grows drunk with truth, stagnant within him." This latest movement in philosophy, though doubtless it had its impulse in the essential nature of man, and denotes a protest by one long thwarted element of our life against the tyranny of the pure reason, has already made some valuable contributions to the apologetic for faith, over and above that sense of cheerfulness with which it has infected a great company of thinking people. It may be that not one of those contributions would convince a man who was disinclined to believe ; but coming as they do at a time when, I contend, a great mass of people are waiting for a decent

excuse to believe, they have the decisive effect of turning the scale. For it is one of the positions which this new philosophic tendency is not ashamed to occupy,—that no pure reason can ever be given for any act of personal life, that we seldom act on reason, that the deepest things cannot be proved, that every step we take here in this world is a leap in the dark, that the evidence always stops short, and that there is no way of filling up the gap except by putting oneself into it; in short, that we live by faith, in obedience to a profound and unconquerable instinct that, to put it variously, a cosmos cannot have chaos for its crown, that there is a final correspondence between man and the Universe, or, in the language of piety, that “this is none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven.”

Along that line of insight rather than of argument, it is not difficult to show that there are certain high postulates, prejudices, beliefs, without which man will never be able to accomplish the long task of life, to overcome its disheartening details; without which, most certainly, he will never bring into play the most precious qualities of his mysterious nature. Indeed, so utterly do

we live at the bidding of these intangible and potent instincts, that if it could be brought home to mankind that these were not true, that they did not represent realities, it is fair to predict that life would come to a standstill, and this suicide and despair would begin with the best first. From that position it is a leap which competent men who see the consequences of the other view are prepared to-day to take, that such prejudices and postulates, such beliefs and intuitions and instincts as lie at the root of man's normal and healthy life, have in that very circumstance sufficient proof and defence. "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*"

Already this recovery of personality has led to a new sense of human responsibility in the teachings of the most recent philosophy. Idealism, twenty years ago, was for the most part rabbinical. It contented itself with proving that the idealistic view was rationally tenable. It seems to me that to-day the note is nothing short of this, that the idealistic view is humanly necessary. Formerly, idealists were content to go on, registering the state of the barometer, telling us from time to time the condition of the weather; to-day, the philosophers have begun to preach. It is not putting the situation unfairly to say, that from

declaring unweariedly, using the terminology of Hegelianism, that all is well, and bound to turn out well, philosophy to-day has begun to declare that everything may yet be well ; but that for that very reason everything is bound to go wrong, unless we, actual living men, see to it !

Further, the disabling and morbid idea that we act with human propriety only when we act for reasons apprehended, that therefore we ought to hold ourselves in suspense on such a momentous matter as our personal faith and not commit ourselves, lest through further knowledge we should learn that we had decided wrongly, that morbid idea, which really would keep us in bed all day, has largely given way under this new access of health and energy. We see now that those who ask us to withhold our assent to faith, and to restrain ourselves from faithful actions, until the evidence is complete, lest further knowledge should show us that we had chosen wrongly, are asking of us something which we are not in the habit of conceding in any other department of our life. We live and learn ; not learn and live.

To the whole contention of this paper it may be opposed, that since the time of the last great reinforcement of religious faculty and personal

idealism—since, in short, those days when last “the sea of faith was at the full”—discoveries have been made as to the processes of nature, and criticisms of the historic documents of spiritual belief have been established, with the effect of disturbing all accepted ideas. That, in consequence, never again can we have a return to faith as faith has hitherto been conceived. But that is just what I deny. Admitting that science and criticism have in their several regions changed many things, this will never withstand a genuine outbreak of temperament, a genuine return of spring and summer to the soul of man. If such a movement is really due, it will soon find new reasons—a new intellectual statement and defence. But at first it will need none of these things. Thomas Paine’s criticisms of Biblical literature have perhaps never been answered; but when the Spirit moved, when men were searched anew by some elementary moral disquietude which led them to cry out in despair and faith, the things that Paine had said seemed far away. “*Simulatque increpuit suspitio tumultus, ilico nostræ artes conticescunt.*” A drowning man is not aware that he is wet.

The faith to which, as it seems to me, we are

about to return, will not be the same in many particulars as that of any previous time ; but it will have the same background, the same fundamental attitude. It will be a newly recovered confidence in life, in that body of personal facts, of moral misgivings, flashes of the ideal and the holy, reminiscences of some previous condition of private integrity and peace, with the corroborations of these which, to the hearing ear and the understanding heart, seem to rise up so fittingly out of life's ordinary events. The new faith will be a return, a kind of homecoming, to a sufficiently solid confidence, that in trusting those elements of our nature which urge us and help us on towards what seems best, we are not deceived ; that rather, in those so personal intimations and contacts, we are dealing with Reality, and with that kind of reality which, for beings such as we are, and placed as we are, is our proper and abiding concern ; that though it is at best but relative proof that we have attained, this is no disparagement, but means only that it is absolute—for us and so far. “ If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne tells the story of a child who had a mark—a birthmark—on her face. She

grew to be a beautiful woman—beautiful, though the mark remained. Her husband, vain and ambitious, set himself to have the mark wiped out. He summoned science to deal with nature. Under the treatment the birthmark began to recede, though meanwhile the victim languished. An hour came when the mark was gone, but in that hour the sweet woman died.

There is no explanation of things which accounts for so many of the facts, as simply to say, that on the soul of man there is an ineradicable birthmark which, at times, *stands out*.

III

THE CRY FOR FREEDOM—NIETZSCHE

FOR us, in Europe, there is at the moment only one object, and it is to reach a decision (I speak for myself) on the question of the ultimate basis of life, for the individual and for society : whether it is to be conceived as natural or as spiritual.

We, in Great Britain, since the war began, have been reading with every variety of emotion, from surprise to terror, books by Treitschke, von Bernhardi, and the others. And, not to put it too finely, we have the feelings towards those who are in the field against us which we should have towards people who had often taken a meal with us, about whom we had just learned that all the time they were carrying about in their pocket a wonderful formula for poisoning the soup !

Perhaps it is to Hegel, ultimately, that we shall have to trace the roots of this movement

which subdues the individual to the claims and necessities of the State. But it is to Nietzsche, with his passion, with his style, that we are indebted for the glorification of force, for the new worship of Thor and Odin, and the new scorn for those ideals which, as a fact of history, Christ offered to the world. It is upon Nietzsche ultimately that von Bernhardi bases his concise and deliberate blasphemy,—that “war is a biological necessity.” Let us then consider Nietzsche, whose spirit is behind all those books and papers and tracts which litter the counters of all our book stores.

Perhaps we shall most easily be just to Nietzsche, and shall best appreciate his significance in saying the things he says at the time when he has said them, if we consider his work as *poetry*. And I mean by “poetry” there what Arnold meant when he defined “poetry” as the “criticism of life,”—as the reaction made upon an elect and sensitive spirit by the aspect of things at the moment. In order to qualify for our acceptance of him as a poet, according to this definition, it is only necessary that Nietzsche should be able to convince us of his own sincerity, of his own unmixed loyalty to such insight as had

been given him ; and in his case this last had a shrewdness and sagacity almost sublime or, rather, diabolical.

The mark of a poet, on Arnold's terms, is, above everything, spontaneity, a natural and incorrigible gift of utterance, and utterance of such a kind that we feel as we listen that it is not the result of planning and calculation, that it is rather the rising and overflow through the spirit of this man of some well, deep in the heart of things.

If I remember rightly what I once learned, and if I was not misinformed at the time, it was this very quality of naturalness and fullness, it might even be excess and violence, which was the accepted sign of the true NABI or prophet of God. His words came pouring out without apology or qualification. Listening to him men felt that he was not saying such things for a livelihood, but only because he was doomed to say them. He might not be rational, or even intelligible, or consistent with himself in his various outpourings, but he was always quite manifestly the medium or mouthpiece of some hidden power ; through him things were being brought into the effective life of man, which had their reason and justification in the deep Source of all things and of our-

selves. Face to face with such an elect spirit, it was perhaps the wisest course to listen ; to interpret his message by the things of one's own spirit ; to let his words pass over us, if they could pass over us ; but if they seemed to be finding their way into us, to attend to them.

Speaking for myself, Nietzsche seems to answer to most of these signs. He does affect me as an authentic voice. I confess that this impression begins to fade when I read books on Nietzsche by disciples of his ; for these disciples *will* find a system in Nietzsche, a reasoned defence of some prejudice of their own ; and the moment we apply reasoning to the complete work of Nietzsche we disturb the atmosphere in which, as it seems to me, he has his proper effect. Face to face with a man of Nietzsche's force and passion and violence it is futile to ask, at least in the first instance, whether he is right or wrong. The fact is, he is *there* ; and since he is *there*, it must be because in some real sense he was due. "Thou askest why?" he writes,—and here you have his humour everywhere,—"Thou askest why? I am not one of those who may be asked for their whys! I am not a barrel of memory to have my reasons with me!"

Now when you separate from these sayings the insolence which tries us so much in Nietzsche, they are not wholly illegitimate. As reasoning, it is quite as forcible on the merely logical plane as, say, Tennyson's main argument in "In Memoriam." To the insinuation of materialism Tennyson retorts in effect: "Here am I so made that I hate and shudder at your ideas; and I hold my shudder to be an argument in the case." Like a man in wrath he protests; and he holds the warmth of his wrath as evidence of the truth of his intuition. Nietzsche does no more in the saying I have quoted and in hundreds of others.

To return to Arnold's definition of the poet as a critic of life, as one who in his message passes judgment upon the temper and ideals of his time, it is easy to name that total view of life, of progress, of society, against which Nietzsche reacted with such passion and fertility as to ensure him a kind of immortality.

It was inevitable that the Western world should not go on as it had been going for fifty years,—attacking, amending, the traditional view of life and all things, producing in one region its Renans, in another its Darwins, in another its Schopenhauers;—it was inevitable that an era of time

which had been giving birth each year to some cold and careful analysis of a great body of facts, to some new "ology" or "onomy," "each a little tinkling-bell that signifies some faith's about to die";—it was inevitable, I say, that out of that vortex of challenge and disillusionment there should arise one who should take literally and as his message that dark result which so much of the learning of the century seemed to insinuate, and should summon men once for all in their actual lives to proceed upon the frank negation of God. It is the nature of things to move on to their proper crisis and catastrophe. Nietzsche was one of those "offences which needs must come." It was given to him to see that the denial of God was not the conclusion of the materialising process. He saw clearly that the denial of God was not the end, on reaching which the ruthless intellect of man might rest. He saw that it is only a new beginning.

He saw that if the ultimate denial was established, then it became us, if we would be self-consistent, to carry that denial back and forward, up and down, swinging it like a sad lamp along all the corridors of our life. He saw, in fact, though he did not put it in these words, that the

materialistic evolutionary hypothesis denies not only God, but man. Wagner had written *The Twilight of the Gods*; Nietzsche wrote *The Twilight of the Idols*. And what he meant was, that if the gods have gone, then the idols, who are the simulacra of the gods, the reminiscence in our moralities of the gods; the pieties, the manners, the tendernesses which had their source and reason in the gods—these must also go. This is the meaning of his contempt for half-and-half men like Strauss and Renan. It is the real meaning of his breach with Wagner and his later preference for the “purely intellectual music of Bizet, wedded to the dispassionate prose of Merimée.”

In Nietzsche's view, Strauss, Renan, Wagner were men who halted betwixt two opinions, who had not the courage to complete the syllogism of denial. Looking back, so far as I am qualified, on the literature of unbelief during our own and an earlier generation, I have the compassion for Nietzsche which we have for Prometheus, for Œdipus, for any tragic figure of literature or of life, in whom some error of the human soul greatly vaunting itself receives the public overthrow of God. Nietzsche went mad.

There is no compelling answer in terms of reason for any profound misapprehension of life. Life is plastic, indifferent, capable to a long length of many interpretations. There is no answer except the test of the experience. If a man will, like Balaam, put aside those private restraints which come from the hard-earned wisdom of the human race, if he will set out, there is a real sense in which he must set out. He must be left to learn from the narrowing of the way by which he goes, and from the behaviour of the beast on which he is riding, the delicate but inviolable nature of things. The great weapon of truth is time. We say, *Solvitur ambulando*; we might likewise say, *Confunditur ambulando*.

It is from this point of view alone that we are able to perceive the positive or constructive element in that mass of moral or immoral and amoral and infra-moral teaching which we all have in our minds when we think of Nietzsche's work. It is from this point of view alone that we can see how we can at all apply the words "positive" and "constructive" to teaching which has certainly the sound of bedlam.

Nietzsche's characteristic teaching takes its point of departure from the blank pessimism of

Schopenhauer. There was a time in Nietzsche's life—rather a precise time; it was when he was a student at Bonn,—when he quite decisively ceased to believe. So far as I am aware, he himself has given us no history of his own spirit during the transition, no account of how it came to pass that one who was the child and grandchild of Lutheran pastors, one who had been cared for by loving Christian women, should find himself stripped of those garments of the spirit which it has been such a poignant sorrow for many another to lose. Nor can one trace anywhere in his work any recollection of even the lost illusions of faith. I should infer that religion with Nietzsche had been simply the acquaintance with a system of rules and manners resting upon a certain metaphysic. This metaphysic, it seemed to him, had become incredible; and with its failure the entire fabric fell away from him. I cannot find in Nietzsche any interval of pathos, of hesitation and misgiving. It would seem that he accepted without reservation or regret the total denial and absence of God. And with him the denial of God did not simply mean the denial of a holy and loving guardian of our lives; it did not mean merely the denial, say, of a future

state, and of "some far-off Divine event." With him the denial of God meant—and this I have said is to the credit of his logic—the denial of everything suggestive of order or sense or purpose in things: it simply meant chaos.

Standing in this "shivered universe," what remained for him? It was at this stage that he fell upon Schopenhauer; and like a man in thirst he drank that goblet to the dregs. "The World is Will"; that seemed to promise a way out. The world is not to be explained in terms of reason. An explanation in terms of reason leaves the door open for the great hypothesis of God: which must not be. It may be that Nietzsche misunderstood Schopenhauer, or, rather, that he allowed himself to take from Schopenhauer suggestions to which by his temperament he was predestined. Certainly he did not rest satisfied with the exhortation or moral formula which Schopenhauer himself commends to those who occupy his ground. For Schopenhauer's recommendation is no more than that we accept our melancholy lot; do nothing to carry on the business; and, if we have opportunity, deal gently with one another until death end all.

Now it is by contrast with that ethic of

Schopenhauer, which counsels man to resignation and apathy and the negating of life, that Nietzsche's ethic, uproarious and disorderly as it is, is at least positive, energetic, robust. Utterly disillusioned, Schopenhauer says in effect: "Let be; let me die." Utterly disillusioned, Nietzsche says: "Let me live; nay, let me kick my heels."

Here, then, let me, imperfectly it must be, introduce what, using a term which is becoming a little overworked amongst us, we should call his message, and proceed to indicate what, according to Nietzsche, was his authority for that message both in history and in that nexus and meeting-place of instincts, as he might describe our soul and all we know.

It is sometimes objected to Nietzsche that he changed his point of view from time to time, and that doubtless if he had been spared he might have come full circle back to faith. I do not find any real change; on the contrary, I find beneath the surface, beneath the various fields of illustration, an unbending persistence in one moral category as the imperative, if not for all men, at least for himself and for all who have ears to hear him. It is true that he has a way of picking the

brains of other men, taking what he likes and using it, out of its original context, it may be, or with another meaning than was originally intended. But perhaps no one of us escapes the temptation to assimilate from our reading and the incidents of our life those things which seem to confirm and reinforce our abiding interest. So it was with Nietzsche. He took up Schopenhauer; thanking him for the category of "the world as will," thanking him, *i.e.*, for the suggestion of some principle other than that of Reasonable Consistency, by the help of which he could look out upon the world. But he did not accept Schopenhauer's ethical conclusions; nor indeed did he accept his understanding of "Will." "Will" became in Nietzsche's hands simply desire, impulse, caprice, appetite, anything at all that moved himself.

In the same way he took up Darwinism, as a working theory of the origin of man, so long as he needed illustrations of man's primitive degradation. But the moment his keen eye detected the innuendo in Darwinism, that a being like man who had come thus far, and from such a lowly place, might after all have within him a protesting and indestructible quality which would

yet compel him upwards even to perfection, at that moment he dropped Darwinism as a system. This forsaking of philosophies and breaking-off of friendships with men gives ground for thinking that Nietzsche did not know his own mind. But the opposite is the truth. He knew his own mind, and held to it so obstinately that he did not permit any old love to check his utterance.

I find in his earliest work, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, the fundamental principle of all his subsequent teaching, the insight which he permitted to carry him wherever it would.

Let us dwell for a moment upon the thesis of that work. If I can isolate it and make it clear, I think we shall have the key to the understanding of all his characteristic words and phrases like "The Will to Live" and "The Will to Power," "The Superman," "Master-morality" and "Slave-morality," "The Transvaluation of all Values" and "Eternal Recurrence." And I can already perceive that this paper will not be able to accomplish more than to illustrate his application here and there of the principle on which he seized in that first book of his. I quote from the

epitome of one of his latest commentators, Dr. Mügge.

“There are two instincts, two states of the human mind—the Apollonian and the Dionysean. On these two physical dispositions depend all the developments of Art; for Apollonism and Dionysism are the pure and direct states of Art. The Apollonian instinct is a sort of dream of beauty: the Dionysean instinct is a kind of intoxication resulting from the delight of mere existence. The ‘*principium individuationis*’ of Schopenhauer and the god Apollo with his sunny eyes: these convey to us the idea of the former. The Dionysean impulses of spring, of the St. Vitus’ dancers of the middle-ages, the conception of the music of the world: these convey to us an idea of the latter. The art and the civilisation of Greece were originally Apollonian; it was a beautiful visionary world and moderation was its axiom. Later on the Dionysean instinct became united with the Apollonian, and together they gave rise to the greatest works of art. For example, in a popular song, melody is the most important part. All music has a Dionysean character; for, being pure will, it symbolises a realm beyond all forms of visible manifestation. Under the influence of this mysterious Dionysean state of music, the Apollonian instinct in the lyric poet comes to life, first as a visionary conception. Thus Schiller mentions a ‘musical sentiment’ as always preceding the composition of his poems” (as our own Burns wrote his songs to music that was already singing in his ear) “. . . Greek tragedy developed itself out of the tragic-choir, the satyr-choir. Tragedy was born of the spirit of music. To the Greek, the satyr was an expression of the longing for freedom, for a return to nature; a longing strengthened by the artificiality of the Apollonian instinct. . . .

“To the mind of the Greek, the satyr bore the stamp of primitive man, possessing all the highest and strongest emotions. . . . The effect of the Dionysean tragedy is, that

State and Society and in general all the depths between man and man, yield to an overwhelming feeling of unity and oneness which leads back to the heart of nature. The metaphysical consolation with which every good tragedy dismisses us is this, that *Life* which is at the heart of all things is, in spite of its different manifestations, for ever indestructible, powerful, joyous. What then was Dionysus? He was a Power excelling the Vine-Spirit and far more ancient. He was the 'will to live,' and it is by that inexhaustible fountain and torrent of energy, expressing itself in motion and emotion, in frenzied music, in ecstasy, in abandonment to impulses, it is on that tide only that man lives when he may be said to live at all."

I am, of course, unable to say whether Nietzsche is justified in his account of the origin of tragedy. He was, it is acknowledged, well equipped for dealing with Greek literature, and commentators who have nothing but abhorrence for his moral teaching, have admitted the depth and originality of his observation. In effect it may well have been as he says, that it was the inrushing of some primitive and irrational Force which fertilised the soul of Greece at a particular moment in her history. It may also be true that the history of man is the alternating domination of Dionysus and Apollo. Emerson reversed the order when he said that all great epochs, epochs of abnormal mental activity, occur at the moment when a nation is passing out of its barbarism; holding,

therefore, that it was not the inrushing of Dionysus which gave birth to music and the tragic emotion, but rather the appearance in the midst of life's exuberance of Apollo the lord of measure; that it was the pressure of thought, the strain of a coming contradiction, which, harnessing in the wild steeds of passion, introduced the human soul to its greatness. And certainly on an appeal to experience, either to our own experience or to the classical autobiographies of the soul, a strong case could be stated for the view that it is not the inrush of the Dionysean spirit, but the approach of the shadow of Apollo which makes for life and fullness. The natural man within each of us is, I suppose, still the primitive man; but is it not our experience that even that natural man within us does not get his true play and freedom until he is forced back into the second place under the dominion of some spiritual purpose? The one proof that untrammelled naturalism is not the proper life of man is simply this, that he cannot go on with it. The one thing we yearn for, as deeply as we yearn for freedom, is for bondage. A man may easily become more natural than it is natural for him to be.

I can recall many a great passage in Tolstoy—

great for its absolute fidelity to the things of the soul—in which the converse to Nietzsche's thesis is illustrated, in which "natural men" like Olenine in *The Cossacks*, Levin in *Anna Karenina*, Prince Andreï in *War and Peace*, and Nekhludoff in *Resurrection*, come upon life, upon their own proper vitality, not when they are letting themselves go, but when for the first time they come within the shadow of life's holier meanings.

However these things may be, and without going more deeply into the matter, there are these two main spirits in life—call them Dionysus and Apollo, The Flesh and the Spirit, Love and Law, Impulse and Reflection, Life and Reason—we might even say Faith and Experience; and the crises in history do come when, after the long tyranny of one of these spirits, the other, equally indestructible, throws off the yoke.

What all this meant for Nietzsche was, that Dionysus was the lord of life, that man's true health and well-being lay, not in thought but simply in life itself, and simply in that life of instinct, of innocence (he calls it), in which he yields to impulse without reflection or misgiving. Now, once more, it was never Nietzsche's way to hold himself bound by any formula, even though

it had been his own. And if the Dionysus-Apollo insight into man's nature had begun to present difficulties or to suggest modifications, he would simply have dropped it as he dropped Schopenhauer and Darwin and Wagner, bearing off with him the one idea to which indeed he had been predisposed. There is evidence that Nietzsche was aware of certain implications in his own interpretation of the great Greek period, which must qualify the headlongness of his propositions. And there is evidence that he did pay heed to them, notably in his own greatest book, I mean, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. For example, let any worldly-minded person begin by hailing Nietzsche as his particular moral guide. Let him begin by quoting Nietzsche in order to justify his own riotousness. If he is loyal even to such a master, Nietzsche will presently begin to make proposals to that man which will, from his own point of view, be as severe and thwarting as would be the ethics of the Church.

"Oh, that ye would understand my word. Be sure to do whatever ye like—only first of all *be* such as *can* will."

"This new command, O my brethren, I give unto you: Become hard."

"Die proudly, when it is no longer possible to live proudly."

"What is freedom? The will to be responsible for one's

self; the maintaining of the distance that separates man from man; becoming indifferent to trouble, severity, privation, and even to life; being ready to sacrifice people to one's cause, *not even excepting thyself.*"

The one idea which Nietzsche carried away with him from his philological studies was the idea that the true sign of that which is good is strength, fullness, spontaneity; and following upon that, that any manner of restriction was of the devil. This is the rallying-point, the nexus of all his subsequent teaching:

"Egoism is of the Essence of all noble souls."

"The senses do not deceive us, . . . at present, we possess knowledge only to the extent of our resolution to accept the testimony of the senses. The rest is abortion, and incomplete knowledge, *i.e.* metaphysics, divinity, psychology, and the theory of perception, or formal science,—sciences of symbols, as logic, and that applied form of logic—metaphysics. *Actuality is never met with in those sciences.*"

"All old-morality monsters, and especially Christianity, have waged war against the passions with a view to exterminating them. *The praxis of the church is inimical to life.*"

In Nietzsche's view Socrates contributed largely to the sadness, and finally to the overthrow, of Greece. Through him largely it came about that the "native hue of resolution was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

"Opinions and valuations with regard to life either for or

against can never in the end be true: they only possess value as symptoms."

"Socrates, according to his descent, belonged to the lowest of the people: Socrates was of the proletariat. He was *ugly*. Ugliness, while in itself an objection, is almost a refutation when found among Greeks." "Often enough ugliness is the expression of a thwarted development. . . . The typical criminal is ugly and decadent."

"Previous to the time of Socrates, dialectic methods were repudiated in good society. We employ dialectics only when we have no other means."

"The dialectician merely leaves it to his opponent to demonstrate that he is not an idiot, thus making him furious and at the same time helpless."

"As long as life is *in the ascendant*, happiness is identical with instinct; to be forced to combat the instincts,—that is the formula of decadence." "Socrates, the chronic valetudinarian, was a mistake. The whole of improving morality, including Christian morality, has been a mistake. It has all been decadence under another name."

"I mistrust all systematisers and avoid them. The desire for system is a lack of rectitude."

"Convictions are prisons. A man who believes, becomes dependent and cannot be upright."

And so on and on.

This, of course, is all very well, but it means what I meant when I said that thoroughgoing materialism not only does away with God, but does away with man. This is to do away with man. Is not society, to which, after all, we owe everything, is not society the attempt to arrive at

a compromise between the free play of instincts and the absolute restriction of instincts? It is obvious that we cannot all of us at every moment of our existence get up and speak, or walk out, or knock one another over. In order to play a game even, one must observe rules. Even in order to be funny one must have a kind of solemn background. In order to be a Nietzschean one must have a contrast in the general orderliness of the people. To take the kind of header that Nietzsche recommends, one must have a jumping-board of patient backs. "When everybody's wearing tweed, up goes the price of shoddy; when everybody's somebody, then nobody's anybody."

A Nietzschean requires spectators who are not Nietzscheans.

Originally it may very well have been that people were left-handed or right-handed as they pleased. But the moment they came together in communities, they were compelled to come to a decision. Otherwise, if each man, that is to say, in using the scythe had taken his own way, they would all have hacked off each other's legs. The left-handedness of a tribesman of Benjamin must have been a disadvantage to him when he went

abroad. Nietzsche is an advocate of left-handedness in morals, appearing in a world which for good or evil has decided to use its right hand.

There is no need for me to deal dialectically with this part of Nietzsche's teaching: that has been done once for all by Plato in his treatment of Thrasymachus in the First Book of the *Republic*, and in his criticism of Callicles in the *Gorgias*. This being so, I should regret that I had laboured the obvious difficulties which beset an unbridled individualism, only that the quotations from Nietzsche, which I made a moment ago, and my comment and illustration, have had the good effect of carrying me on to a later stage of the man's teaching. And here I shall increase my own pace and take a short cut towards my conclusion.

It is not to be supposed that Nietzsche was not aware of the embarrassments of his own theory: he was aware of them, as being within the theory itself and also within these institutions of the spirit, systems of philosophy, of ethics, manners, customs, proverbs, and above all within the Christian tradition which had had dominion over man for so long, and still more or less occupied the field.

It is evidence to me that Nietzsche became aware of the difficulties in his own Dionysean maxims, — that I detect a steadily increasing severity, and (in spite of himself) a groping after system, in his subsequent books. He sees that, without the pressure of the Apollonian spirit, Dionysism is mere riotousness, ending in melancholy and ennui.

Nietzsche's total burden and protest is: to oppose with every weapon of irony, laughter, argument, contempt, all the current fashion of liberty, democracy, socialism, pity, and equality. For him there are two orders of men: there are masters and there are slaves. That, he says, is the ordinance of nature; and here he annexes the whole literature of "natural law in the spiritual world" in a way which would have greatly amazed some of its genial advocates amongst ourselves.

"Ye preachers of equality, ye are tarantulæ. Therefore do I tear your web, that your *revenge* may leap forth from behind your word 'justice.' 'Will unto Equality,' they say shall henceforth be the name of virtue, and they clamour against everything that hath *power*. O ye preachers of equality, the tyrant-frenzy of Impotence. Your most secret tyrant-longings cry thus in you for 'equality.' Fretted conceit and suppressed envy thus break out in you. Nay, friends; distrust all in whom the impulse to punish is powerful, and who talk much

of their justice. Unto me, Justice saith: Men are not equal: neither shall they become so. Life is a struggle to rise, and to surmount itself. Divinely will we strive against each other.

“He who is of my type cannot escape the hour which saith unto him: Now go thou only the way of thy greatness. Life is that which must ever surpass itself.”

He is aware, too,—and, indeed, the theory involves it,—that there are those who will respond to his summons and those who will not. He is not anxious to make proselytes; they must come only if they are called. And if they obey, it is to no easy life he summons them. For by this time Zarathustra also has so far conformed to all ethical codes, that he too announces a motive for his master-man. In this world wherein no Divine or resolute meaning is to be found, what are these master-men to live for? To what light are they to lift up their faces in the intervals of reaction or misgiving? For Zarathustra also has now come so far towards normal manhood that he confesses to great loneliness at times, and sorrow and bitterness:

“Oh, loneliness, my home-loneliness! Among the many I felt forsaken. To feel forsaken is one thing: to feel lonely is another. O human kind, how strange thou art!”

What, then, is the star for this elect spirit in a

degraded world? Not mere Dionysism: Zarathustra is beyond that now.

"If ye had more belief in life, ye would yield yourselves less to the impulse of the moment."

Not mere joy or animalism.

"*Creating*—that is the great salvation from suffering, and life's alleviation." "Let yourself be in your action as the mother is in the child." "Man is not a goal, but a bridge."

And a bridge to what? He is a bridge between the animal and the *Superman*.

"Let us build. On the tree of the future we will build our nest. The eagles shall bring us food. . . ."

"Man shall be educated for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior. Let women be a joy, pure and fine like a precious jewel, illumined with the virtues of a world not yet come. Let the beam of a star shine in your love. Let your hope say: 'May I bear the superman.' Marriage,—so call I the will of the twain to create the one that is more than those who created it. But that which the far-too-many call marriage is one long stupidity. Even your best love is but a torch to guide you unto loftier paths. . . ."

"A great horror to us is the degenerating sense which says: 'All for myself.' Upward soareth our sense; the body goeth through history,—growing and fighting. And the spirit—what is it unto the body? The herald, companion, and echo of its fights and victories." . . . "Man hath been only an attempt. We fight step by step with the giant, Chance. There are a thousand paths which have never yet been trodden. Arise, ye lonesome ones, one day shall ye be a people. Out of you a chosen people shall arise; and out of it the Superman." . . .

"I love only the land of my children." . . . "Only the day after to-morrow is mine."

He is equally alive to the opposition which his message will encounter from everything that is ancient and experienced in the institutions of the people, from civilisation, from the traditional pieties of life, and especially from Christianity, so far as it sanctions the existing state of things.

Here, had I made a more economical use of my time, I should have dealt with Nietzsche's breach with Wagner, not only for the sake of the matter at issue, but as making clear the nature and depth of his divergence from Christianity.

I know no words about music and about the music of Wagner, so luminous, so exact and convincing, as those which Nietzsche knows how to make use of. He can make plain to our reason things so intangible that we ourselves should scarcely have known them, or known that we had felt them. His words have the effect of helping us to identify our own souls, of helping us to retain in our memory—because he has caught them in some phrase—images and impressions which would otherwise have died, so

far as things may be said to die, with the actual moment.

“With Wagner we scale the most elevated peaks of feeling, and it is only there that we feel ourselves brought back to Nature’s boundless heart, into the realm of liberty. There we see ourselves and our fellows emerge as something sublime from an immense mirage, if I may call it so: we see the deep meaning in our struggles, in our victory and our defeat. Changed thus into tragic men, we return again to life in a strangely consoled mood. . . . The trouble and proud wonder which an artist experiences with regard to the world are united to an ardent desire to embrace the same world in love.”

And yet, soon afterwards, the man who wrote such words could write these :

“Wagner has been ruinous to music. Was Wagner a musician at all? He was at least something else in a higher degree, *i.e.* an unsurpassable actor. . . . Even I was at first fascinated by him, but it was a mistake on my part. I freed myself from him, though it caused me much suffering. . . . Wagner is a Romanist, and he made the poor Devil, the country lad, Parsifal, a Roman Catholic. I despise everyone who does not regard Parsifal as an outrage in morals.”

You get at the secret of this sudden aversion if you listen to another quotation :

“In Wagner’s works,” says Nietzsche, “there is always someone who wants to be saved.”

That’s it. The conflict between Nietzsche and

Wagner was reproduced—the personalities being smaller—in the conflict, some years ago, between W. E. Henley and Robert Louis Stevenson. Henley could not understand how an erect and strenuous spirit like Stevenson could have his hankering after forgiveness. He called Stevenson “The Shorter Catechist.” It seemed to him unmanly, weak, cringing, cowardly,—precisely the words which Nietzsche uses of Wagner. The fact is, Nietzsche did not understand Christianity ; and nowhere did he show himself less capable congenitally of understanding Christianity than in his misapprehension of the nature of Christian forgiveness. I am not saying that the Church had altogether in his day (or in ours) guarded herself sufficiently against the imputation of antinomianism and sentimentalism. But it ought not to have been beyond Nietzsche’s penetration to see that the cry for forgiveness is in many ways very like his own purest cries for personal freedom ; that the cry for pardon is in one respect the protest of a man, in the name of what he believes to be his essential nature, against that lower expression of himself which he sees in his moral failures. Adopting Nietzsche’s own jargon, I should say that, occupying the place that it does

in the Christian scheme, forgiveness, the definite pardon by God, the new right to lift up our head again, though we have been what we have been, and the consequent inrush of a new and wholesome vitality—all that is the confirmation by Christianity of everything that was true in Nietzsche's analysis of the soul.

I find, as is usual in a paper in which one simply writes on and on, that I have arrived at what must be the limit of my space without having said the very things which were most eminently in my mind when I began. I had hoped, for example, to ask myself how serious men ought to deal with this spirit,—which, not always traceable to Nietzsche, has its flagrant apostles amongst us,—so as to absorb and obey what is significant and organic to the enduring soul of man.

I definitely close with one remark ; let us make of it what we may. It is this : I cannot find the trace of any thoroughly good man or woman, of any person having first-rate ability and a grace of Christian character to match it, with whom poor Nietzsche ever came into contact. He knows only the hypocrisies and frauds and disingenuousnesses of Christianity. He knows only its

greed of power, of physical influence, of suspicion.

"It is the shrewdness of Christianity," he says, "that men talk about their beliefs, but they obey their instincts."

And so, when, as it seemed to him, the metaphysic of Christianity gave way, there were no tender memories, no dear ties, no cautionary examples to restrain him, and it might be to save him.

"A philosophy"—and the same is true of a personal faith—"which we accept out of pure intellect, will never become quite our own, because it never was our own."

Those are his words. They are true.

And one of the ties deeper than reason which binds men to religious beliefs will always be the quite evident happiness and unworldliness of those who profess such a belief. Nietzsche, in his own bitter way, once proposed for himself a thesis on which he should write. The subject was to be:

"What is the nature of the kinship or contrast between a man like Tischendorf, who had examined and judged over two hundred manuscripts, dating from before the ninth century—a man cunning and diplomatic, fanatical, frivolous, ever so sharp-sighted in his own department, painfully exact in publication, vain beyond all bounds, greedy of gain, *defensor fidei*, a courtier and a speculator in the book-market—what is the

nature of the kinship or contrast between such a man and the writers of the New Testament with the Sinaitic recension of which his name will be for ever associated?"

We are all responsible for one another; and the Church of every age is responsible if not for the general atmosphere, at least for its own atmosphere. And perhaps something different might have come of Nietzsche. There was a tender spot in a soul, and a capacity for a high fidelity, who could write of Jesus of Nazareth as Nietzsche did write (if I have caught the tone of his voice):

"There has been only one Christian, and He died upon the Cross."

I might here take a deep breath and say, adopting for one moment the Carlylean, accidental view of history, that it is in consequence of Nietzsche's utter misunderstanding of Christianity and scorn for its words and ideas and personalities, that Europe to-day is one battlefield.

IV

THE CRY FOR CONTROL—TRACTARIANISM

IN order to feel absolutely free, I shall not begin with a definition of my subject. "Tractarianism" I shall take to mean the whole business with which I shall have been dealing in the course of this paper. I shall take it to mean the entire body of ideas and points of view which are let loose in the mind of an intelligent man by that movement associated with the name and personality and career of John Henry Newman.

In this paper I shall attempt no criticism of a formal kind. I have indulged my hostility to the whole movement elsewhere, and have said what it then occurred to me to say by way of meeting Newman's chief positions. I felt then, and I feel more powerfully now, that such a movement as Tractarianism deserves something more than criticism or hostility. And most of the men who have set themselves to disparage the Tractarians

on the philosophical or historical plane, admirable and fierce as their work has been, simply demonstrate to me that they themselves were congenitally and it may even be from all eternity disqualified for the task. A movement may have attained such proportions and have been the instrument of such blessings and powers to innumerable souls, that to say that it all rested upon an error may even be to impugn the Divine control of the world. The first thing that a man has got to face in dealing with this movement, or with any movement in the same unworldly region, which has attained a like volume and power—is the fact that it all happened. If you demonstrate to me with mathematical precision that it ought not to have happened, then I can only retort that obviously in this world there is an order of things which is not amenable to your mathematical vetoes. In fact, a man who sets himself to show that first and last and all along the line a movement proceeded in defiance of certain facts and rules and laws which are patent to all the moment you consider, only heightens the wonder, and, for me, only increases the authenticity of such a movement. His argument really is on all fours with the sophism of Achilles and the tortoise.

On a certain conception of space, namely, that it consists of an infinite number of contiguous points, it can be demonstrated that Achilles can never overtake the tortoise : just as it can be shown on the same postulate that the minute-hand of my watch can never reach the next five minutes' space. But we know that Achilles could overtake the tortoise, and that the minute-hand of my watch will reach that impossible place—and this, finally, for the same reason as led to Tractarianism in spite of all kinds of rationalism, namely, because the human reason, in dealing with anything that lives and moves has no function except, first to look on and afterwards to consider and understand. The mere intellect, as Bergson has been the last to say, though he was not the first, is distinguished by an utter incapacity to deal with reality.

Any movement so general, so cordial, so happy and triumphant in the experience of those who have flung in their lot with it, any movement which, as we see from this distance, has come to occupy such a place and to affect its surroundings, as it has beyond all question done, is a movement in my view which was inevitable and according to the will of God. That is to say, it

must have arisen out of the necessities of the case, and must have had allies in the true and abiding spirit of man. It will not do to explain it away by such a saying as had vogue for a time, a saying which I have always thought the height of absurdity, namely, that had Newman known German, there would have been no Oxford movement. People who say such a thing hold a different view from mine of human history. But surely we do not live in such a haphazard and precarious world. To make a tremendous consequence hang exclusively upon some thread of chance is surely to come near to Atheism. The converse might with more reason be urged. It may be the true explanation of everything to say that Providence, or Fate, or the nature of things was so intent upon securing a certain result that it defended some slender incident (Newman's ignorance of German, in which so many of his friends, Pusey, Hurrell Froude, Mozley, were expert) lest the great event and consequence should be imperilled.

Allow me then to recall some of the features of the time which gave Tractarianism its significance, some of the current principles held privately and avowed, which, as I hold, becoming

fixed and general, encountered in Newman and his fellows their predestined opposition and, in his case, their overthrow. There will be no need for me to do more than allude to names and tendencies.

“Perhaps it is not too much to say that never, during the course of well-nigh two thousand years in the world, did Christianity so widely lose the character of a spiritual religion as during the last half of the eighteenth century. Not in England only but in all Protestant countries the general aim of its accredited teachers seems to have been to explain away its mysteries and to extenuate its supernatural character ; to reduce it to a system of Ethics little differing from the doctrines of Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius.” “Religious dogmas were almost openly admitted to be nonsense.” “Religious emotion was stigmatised as enthusiasm.” A bishop of that period prepared his own epitaph,—which still exists,—to the effect that he was, and he thanked God for it, the foe of all enthusiasm. “Theology had sunk into an apologetic which seemed to be satisfied if it had demonstrated the possibility of the bare Existence of a Deity. Morality rested upon the lowest instincts of human nature, as, *e.g.*, that

God is stronger than we are and able to denounce us if we do not do good." "The categorical imperative was, 'Be respectable,' and proofs were continually being led in the sermons of the time that religion is on the whole conducive to pleasure." "The age seemed smitten with an incapacity for producing deep or strong feeling. . . . There were few poets, and none of a high order. Philosophy had fallen into the hands of men of a dry prosaic nature, who had not enough of the materials of human feeling in them to imagine any of its more complex and mysterious manifestations; all of which they either left out of their theories or introduced them with such explanations (Hume, *e.g.*) as no one who had experienced the feelings could receive as adequate."

Such a state of matters could not continue in a race which, to say no more, had been wont to draw from deeper wells. There was sure to be a cry of hunger which would satisfy itself somehow. Into this emptiness came John Wesley and the grace of God by his word. Though the Tractarians had nothing but hard words and an intellectual contempt for evangelicalism as they knew it, they have one and all of them paid tribute to the work of Wesley, acknowledging

freely that he restored the idea of supernatural grace to the religious life of England. Newman himself passed through a spiritual crisis in no way differing from a typical Methodist conversion; and however much he may have resented the surroundings and manners of evangelicalism he never moved away from the discoveries of himself and of God which had been borne in upon him at the first. Christianity was always to him a tragic experience, in which a man is saved from some elementary terror, not by any process of enlightenment or alleviation, but by the reception and acceptance of something proposed and offered, something which his own reason, his taste, his pride may resist, but something which his essential nature is crying out for, something which has its only but sufficient evidence in the utterness of his own collapse, and the certainty of his own ruin if he continues to reject it. The Tractarian spirit will always descend upon the Church in an age in which serious men feel that it is no time for half-measures.

The more deeply one considers any phenomenon of the nineteenth century, the more thoroughly is one convinced that the French Revolution dominated everything. I do not know a juster

thing to say, and one which, if you accept it, means more than that the French Revolution sent a shudder through three men of supreme rank, who together affected fundamentally the whole expression of the nineteenth century—its politics, its idealism, its religion. I mean Burke and Wordsworth and Newman. They had seen—Wordsworth with his own eyes—human nature let loose, and they had no wish to see it again.

It is, I venture to think, by keeping our eyes upon the swift and symbolical degradation of the Revolution in France that we can best understand the wave of timidity and disillusionment which passed over England in the first thirty years of that century. The finer spirits had supposed that what man needed, and what alone he needed, was to be set free from social tyrannies ; that thereafter the essential nature of man, which was supposed to be, and had been declared by Rousseau to be, “wonderfully good and innocent,” would rise naturally into a beautiful behaviour which man would go on maintaining and making more beautiful. Men who are now midway through life are old enough to recall the rhetoric of their own earlier days, when it was

believed that if only the people had two things,—secular education and the franchise,—wars and animosities and licentiousness even would pass away as tortures and superstitions had passed away. The disillusionment and sorrow of our time has at the heart of it this very disappointment. And the next great movement, I hold, in the Church will be based upon the same timidity, approaching to terror at times, that lies at the back of all Wordsworth's greatest poetry, and became the very basis and reason of Tractarianism.

What happened in France—and though history never repeats itself, yet the human soul is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in its ultimate attitudes and reactions and precautions, and these form the material of religion—what happened in France was that human nature, let loose from the old feudal restraints, plunged into a liberty without obligation, without any holy background or overmastering idea in which to rebuke itself and to recover itself; and had ended in an unbridled orgy under the ægis of a goddess of reason who was simply incarnate licentiousness. Wordsworth had witnessed all that—and though Browning went too far in calling him "The Lost Leader," still it is true that though he

is ever on the side of man, his mind is haunted by the memory of that great collapse. There is never absent from his writing a spirit of caution, an appeal to make the best of what remains to us all and can never be taken from us. He asks us to be on our guard against all violent and catastrophic courses. He would assure us that true freedom lies not in circumstances but in the soul; that the really good things of life are open and free to us all—the natural world, the hills, “the round ocean and the living air, and the blue sky and in the mind of man,” so that his friend Charles Lamb twitted him, that in his view a man could not be a man unless he had a mountain outside his window. It is this message of caution, of patience—this appeal to men to find liberty and the joy of life in themselves, in disregard and contempt of circumstance, which lies, I repeat, at the heart of his most significant work.

“The primal duties shine aloft like stars,
The Charities that soothe and heal and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of man like flowers.”

“A true man
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause,
And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of heaven’s applause.”

“Long have I loved what I behold :
The night that calms, the day that cheers ;

THE CRY FOR CONTROL—TRACTARIANISM 81

The Common growth of mother-earth,
The humblest mirth and tears.
These given, what more need I desire,
To stir, to soothe, to elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or may create?"

Or again :

"There's not a man
That lives, who hath not known his godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings, in the strength of nature."

In these, and I claim that these are characteristic of Wordsworth's mature inspiration, for his inspiration was not like Shelley's, purely intuitional, but was the result of a pressure of reason upon things,—in these you have Wordsworth's reaction (to use our modern phrase) against a wind which was blowing strongly in his day, a wind which seemed to him to threaten to fling down some long-flying flag of the soul.

And if you say, "But Wordsworth was a poet, an artist," and proceed to afflict me with some talk about art for art's sake, I reply that, like Dante, Wordsworth was above everything a thinking man and a moralist whose work is penetrated by a moral concern. And besides, we have his own explicit avowal in a letter to Sir

George Beaumont that in all his poetry he is to be considered a teacher or nothing.

Now all this is not beside the point when I go on to say that in essence the caution and conservatism which underlies Wordsworth is the same spirit precisely, and rooted in the same circumstances, as gave rise and cogency and joy and prosperity to the Tractarian movement. Both offer the aristocratic or individualistic solution of life's problems. Both have a genuine fear of human nature except within the sanctions of a long-established society. In both there is a shrinking from the face of things, a falling back upon an esoteric insight and experience.

Now if Wordsworth behaved in this way simply because he was an Englishman, if the wave of liberty and secular knowledge and analysis as these assaulted all the institutions of the Spirit, had this effect of fear upon him, it is not to be wondered at that in England at that time there should be a group of sensitive men in the Church with the fineness to detect the same grounds for fear, with the speculative boldness to push their inquiries back and back into still remoter causes; and with the training and temperament as officers in the Church to conclude

that the Church was the instrument by which the higher interests of life could be secured, and the home in which a totally different moral taste and ambition could be created and fostered.

Stripped of all that was merely local or temporary, the problem as the Tractarians perceived it, was precisely the problem which confronted Faust in the very moment of his dying. He saw, you remember, a great wave of knowledge, of knowledge let loose from the hard-won maxims of the human race, and in antagonism to them, he saw that wave creeping up over the sand on a long promontory. He saw it rising up and up towards two buildings erected there on the shore of the inexorable ocean of time. The two buildings were the twin edifices of the Christian spirit in the world,—namely, a Christian Church and a Christian home. Heedless of the value of these, he had consented to their destruction. But, as the smoke of their burning blew towards him, he realised how he had injured the human race, and in a cry of agony that he might be spared, if not to replace those ancient haunts of the spirit, at least to offer mankind some other reason and retreat for life, Faust fell down dead.

And now let me pass by all manner of things,

and proceed to fling down some of the propositions which I should have liked to co-ordinate into some kind of system.

The Tractarians set themselves, as they believed, to save Society as they and we know Society. And they believed it could be saved only by a new manifestation of the supernatural powers inherent in the Church of Christ. Now with that position we should probably none of us quarrel if we were permitted to define the terms in our own way. But with that position I find myself in an increasing and deepening sympathy—even when the terms are defined as they were defined by the Tractarians. Society, as we know it, is a Christian product. Marriage, as we know it, is part of the Christian discipline or “kultur.” I do not wonder that certain things which I hold to be cardinal in social life should be assailed in our day, any more than I should wonder at a building collapsing when I know that for a long time people have been undermining its foundations. The Tractarians chose as their way of influencing the world that the Church should stand aloof from men. The first thing was for the Church to save herself, to establish anew her bodily existence in the midst of all human contentions. And so

the Tractarians—witness Newman's sermons—continually declare that there is no hope, until Christian men separate themselves from the general life that is about them, and live as men have not lived for generations, a more secluded and supernatural life. The world as such was almost wholly evil. The contentions of men were all rooted in self-seeking, however their spirit might be cloaked in high-sounding words. The human reason had got out of hand, and was now intruding into matters for which she was in the nature of things not competent. Criticism, analysis, had reached a point where thinking had become a vice,—simply another form of self-indulgence, and so on.

The Tractarians were right in believing that the Church is strongest when she is in protest against the spirit of the time. It is minorities which control the world. And in taking the high ground which she did take, it was only a late instance of a recurring and invincible instinct of the Christian spirit. Already we can detect this exclusiveness in the New Testament.

“Beloved, we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the Evil One.” It is the very breath of the Old Testament, subsequent to the Exile,

“Chronicles” may not be good history but it is excellent devotion, and represents the attitude which the Church will always take in a day of general apostasy. The finer souls will draw together, to cherish in each other’s breast the sacred fire. The Church will always pass into a period when she will cease disputing with the world—as I think she should now cease—and should proceed to cultivate her own life. There are things which are not true for the world, which are binding on members of Christ’s body. Indeed, I doubt very much whether it is possible to practise Christianity in the world, whether it must not be practised within the believing community and towards the world.

No good comes of bullying men of the world with the enunciation of our higher principles. These the world fundamentally rejects because meanwhile it has no taste for them. We must convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

And there are times—I hold the present to be such a time—when we can do this only by the manifestation of a holier and more satisfied life within the community. We must not hesitate to tell men that Christianity is torture to the natural

man; and that that is so because, in the bracing language of our fathers, the natural man is damned.

“The question to-day is not, is Christianity true, but is Christianity possible?”

You cannot prove to the world that Christianity will work: it will not work for worldly men. On the purely intellectual level Nietzscheanism is as self-consistent a system as Christianity. And if the one or two absolutely essential things in Christian dogmatics are withdrawn—such as the existence of the soul and a judgment at the end of the world, in which men will be tried by their loyalty to Christ—truths not of the reason—if these be withdrawn, then Antichrist can give reasons for his rule.

The instinct to give up the world slumbers at all times within the Church, and from time to time becomes public and inevitable. Unless we are going to secularise all history, this instinct betrays some necessity in the religious soul. The required atmosphere is secured by shutting out certain things, by selection and refusal. But all thinking, all sane living, proceeds by the same process—by walling off things which are meanwhile irrelevant to the purpose in hand. It is one description of

an insane man that everything occurs to him at the same moment and as being of equal importance. And to quote Bergson again, the very function of the brain is to enable us, not to remember but to forget, to exclude, to select.

There is something which claims my allegiance in a saying of Newman's to the effect that the vicissitudes in the soul of a poor Irishwoman are of more consequence to God than the fall and the disintegration of empires. At any rate, I challenge any Christian man to continue to hold the converse—or to preach the converse.

“The spectacle of triumphant evil and of the world's corruption has always acted upon some remarkable minds like the perpetual presence of some hateful apparition, penetrating them with disgust, depressing them with gloom, or goading them to retaliation. They are ever in imaginary contest with that foe—that hostile impersonation, challenged by his success and disquieted by his satisfaction. Such minds have embraced the appalling vision of the world's evil with the keenness and illumination of inspired prophets” (Mozley)—and again and again they see no immediate resource but to gather together like-minded people, in order that in each other's society, and as is

believed, within a more immediate and sustained communion with the Unseen, they may continue to believe in their own best inspirations.

The criticism of Tractarianism which comes ready to hand, is that it was a Clerical movement: and this is supposed of necessity to disparage it.

To that criticism I have two things to say: first, it was not a purely clerical movement; and, second, supposing it was, it will not do to give it that name and then stop thinking about it. To say that it was a clerical movement need only mean, and in the circumstances only meant, that it was a movement amongst those who, by their very calling, were most concerned about the welfare of the Church, and most distressed by the apparent contradictions of her whole idea both within the Church and in the world. It is not strange that the Church recognised the situation, in her heart and brain. In my own view it would not disparage or reduce the authority of a movement in this country that it should begin with a small group of highly educated and sensitive men who are set apart for this very thing, to feel in a kind of substitutionary way the malady or threatening of our time, to feel as a personal

grief the general apostasy, and to examine themselves in order to see some way of escape. Unless there was never intended to be anything in the metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep, it must always be in the minds of selected men that things first become acute and intolerable. "I protest," said an apostle, "that we die daily—nevertheless you live."

I should not disparage a movement which should begin with the frank facing of two incontrovertible positions as I take them to be: first, that a religion must never be allowed to become less than it was—less either in the matter of its moral severity, or less in the matter of its ministrations of peace; and second, that whilst Popery and Calvinism were, and are, real religions, having created and moulded nations and laws and societies, a vague and consenting Christianity has done nothing and is never likely to do anything.

Then there is a second criticism which I shall allude to, and close. I mean the criticism, also made in disparagement, that the movement was academic, secluded, aristocratic—in short, that it was an Oxford movement. But in the first place it did not remain at Oxford. And again, the

beginnings of all great movements have been in some place which, if it was not in Oxford, was nevertheless a place of retreat, where men could think out things and see the bearing of one thing upon another. And besides, since a great part of the challenge to the Church and Christian creed was made in the name of reason and enlightenment and new learning, it was a fitting and admirable thing that the defence should come by the lips of men who could not be accused of ignorance. In these later days we have all been greatly relieved by the services rendered to faith by university men—by men like James Ward of Cambridge and William James of Harvard.

It is a question to ask ourselves whether it is not the absence of some such place of intense and thorough thinking which is responsible for the want of decision in our own immediate outlook and for the want of concentration upon some immediate task of the Spirit.

And there, by the way, I have touched upon another matter which I should have liked to dwell upon. The Church needs for its life and for its influence upon every passing generation some aim short of the ultimate aim of the

Kingdom of God. The religious life of Scotland has always had, I think, a very near horizon. We have had always some definite plea, some protest or claim; and we have included or excluded men by their attitude towards that particular thing. It made for the strength of Tractarianism, and it makes for the strength of the High Church party, that it knows what it wants; and what it wants, it wants from you before it has any further dealings with you.

It was inevitable that the Tractarians should try to put a curb upon the spirit of criticism, upon what they would not have hesitated to call the licentiousness of the mere intellect. Newman may not have known German, but he had learned from Kant, by way of Coleridge, of the difference between the "Verstand" and the "Vernunft"—and in consequence you will find in his apologetic wonderful anticipations of recent and present-day results in psychology. There is an amazing similarity in the underlying ideas of such very dissimilar books as *The Grammar of Assent*, the Pragmatism of William James, and the Personal Idealism of men like Schiller and Bussell and Inge.

The only difference is that Newman and the

Tractarians *proceed upon the truth—that finally the thing which disposes a man to accept a belief is a last prejudice or bias in his own mind towards it.* The Tractarians would not agree that *truth* is simply *what one troweth*. Such an idea was their *bête noire*. But they did agree that training and early suggestion had much to do with the requirements which anyone will afterwards make of any theory of human life and destiny which is proposed for his acceptance. They were altogether opposed to the idea, which indeed has nothing to say for itself, that Truth must not receive any assistance from within our own minds. We hear men speak as though nothing must ever be gained for Truth from within and by the mind's own courage, enabling us to face difficulties. In order to be intelligent, it is announced that Faith must always be making concessions, and that it is only when she acknowledges herself beaten that she is sound and healthy. They held that a great belief is not to be gained by making a doctrine less supernatural, but by making the mind more aspiring; not by lowering the truth but by raising the mind. The mind, they held, is to be trained to faith of set purpose and by distinct inculcation of all the imagery of faith upon its

attention (Mozley). And so, whilst it would be unfair to accuse the Tractarians either at the beginning or in their present representatives of encouraging superstition and over-beliefs, they certainly—and I for one do not blame them—were not too eager to examine critically men's habitual ways of thinking. They were always afraid lest, in emptying out the bath, you might empty out the baby. They shared Blougram's fear, that if you begin to make cuts at the outgrowths of faith, at the enthusiastic expressions of belief which have come down to us from warmer and surer times and from more intimate communications with God, you may wound something vital: in any case you whet your own appetite for criticism. Like Blougram, they were afraid—and I think I rather share their misgiving, though I should have to alter the phraseology—that “once cut at the Naples' liquefaction, and you may end with Fichte's clever cut at God Himself.”

V

TERTIUM QUID: THE MESSAGE OF G. K. CHESTERTON

THERE is one qualification which I can claim for presuming to write upon the work of Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton with the view of indicating his spirit and intention—this, namely, that I start with a rather enthusiastic prejudice in his favour. For it is one of many proofs that Mr. Chesterton has something vital to say to us, and challenges the very temper of the time, that of those who know his work with any real understanding, there are only two classes—those who receive him with enthusiasm, and those who become quite angry when you mention his name. There are, of course, others who adopt another attitude. They say he is simply a very bold and careless writer who has a trick of exaggeration and paradox. I do not propose to deal with these last: no good could come of it; we have nothing in common.

In dealing with a man's work it is an advantage to have a prejudice in his favour. It seems to me indeed that it is only about those for whom we have a private regard that we should take upon ourselves to speak. Our prejudice gives us our point of view, and in every region our *view* is largely determined by our *point of view*. We know how very dangerous an exercise it is for us to be speaking about one who is absent, unless we are quite sure that we like him. We know how, otherwise, we are apt to fall into a merely external and critical tone of voice, to make an unfair selection of his words or his actions, and so arrive at a conclusion which really all the time was predetermined by the bias of our mind. The fact is, that in dealing with a man like Chesterton, who is never for one moment engaged with anything less than the ultimate meaning of life, we cannot avoid playing with loaded dice. On ultimate matters we have none of us mere opinions, in the strict sense of the word. We have really only prejudices. What we fondly imagine to be our opinions are without doubt the effect or resultant within us of an unfathomable wealth of instincts, reasons, desires, corroborated or modified or contradicted by education, by

environment, by the stimulus of example, by the rebuke of pain—all these fixed, summarised, and sealed in moulds of thought or faith from time to time by some pre-eminent event of our personal life. The white sheet of paper with which we begin our life is an impossible fancy. We begin with, so to speak, a sheet of sensitised paper on which innumerable characters are already inscribed in invisible ink. We begin with a possible career ready to declare itself, ready to take advantage of occasions, ready to find correspondences in the world. What we see in life depends, when all is said, upon certain secrets of ultimate personality ; and what we shall see in any man like Chesterton, whose whole intellectual interest is in life considered in its ultimate significance, will likewise depend upon the secret things of our spirit.

It is easy to name the features in Chesterton's work which have made the bricks fly at his head. Those features which have provoked this violence in certain souls have had a milder effect in the case of certain others : they scarcely know whether to accept him or not. For one thing, his confidence in the value of human existence, or (to use the words we know best) his belief in God, is a very strange thing in those high places of

literature and art and philosophy which together form Chesterton's chosen ground. And in his case belief in God is no difficult attainment, no conclusion to which he merely inclines simply to save him from despair or madness. (He sees very clearly that faith alone really does save men from despair and madness, but it was not because of that that he first believed.) He believes in God with heartiness and uproariousness. If you were to ask him, as many of his critics in various ways have asked him, for what reason he believes, he would probably retort by telling you that it is for the same reason as he eats, or laughs, or takes a walk in the moonlight, *i.e. because he wants to*. He would be quite willing to confess to you that ultimately the reason for the faith in his heart was precisely the same as the reason for, say, the nose on his face—namely, that there it is, that he was so made. Deeply considered, that is neither frivolous nor unphilosophical. We might make a list of the most serious thinkers of the world, beginning with St. Augustine (to go no farther back), including such names as Pascal and our own Butler, and closing with the contemporary school of philosophy in Oxford, and with William James of Harvard, the fundamental argument for

faith in each case being simply that which Chesterton states and reiterates with violence and enthusiasm : that so we are made, that to be a man is to have—so to put it—some share in God.

This defence of faith which Chesterton has celebrated—namely, that the faculty and exercise of faith belong to the proper life and essence of man, that belief is a normal function of the human soul—is his message to our time : it is the background and motive of all his work. He is the protagonist of normal men, seeking to declare and to defend their rights, and, above everything, their right to believe in God. I do not wonder, therefore, that those people should not like Chesterton, and should privately be rather astonished that a man of his wide-awakeness and erudition should be saying the confident things that he does say, and that his whole work should be penetrated by Christianity—those people who imagined that the whole Christian view of God and the world had received its quietus from Tyndal and Huxley and Renan and Strauss, who have not been giving their minds to the later stages of the controversy, and who are therefore not aware of the embarrassments which pure materialism has discovered from its own postulates. But it is not only the substance

of Chesterton which offends many ; it is not only that certain people are enraged that the spiritual basis of life should have found such a cheerful and boisterous defender, who will not take the materialists so seriously as they take themselves : there are many others who are probably in perfect agreement with Chesterton's principles and point of view who are nevertheless offended and irritated by the manner in which he *will* say what he has to say. There is no doubt whatever that Chesterton's humour and playfulness—his ridiculousness, indeed—has had the effect of diminishing his authority for a great many people. It is a very curious thing that we all of us are much more easily convinced by a solemn manner than by a happy manner. For my own part, I agree with Chesterton that when we deal in a merely solemn way with the ultimate meaning of our life it is a proof that at that moment we ourselves are not very sure of it. It was this paradox which the plain man—a verger he is reported to have been—had at the back of his mind when he professed that *although* he had heard some twenty courses of Bampton Lectures on the Defence of Faith, he still remained a humble believer.

Let me bring before your minds an historical

contrast. There is a very obvious similarity between the humour of Thomas Carlyle and that of Chesterton. There is, indeed, a very interesting identity between the messages of the one and the other, Carlyle girding at the Utilitarians of his day as Chesterton pokes fun at the "Scientists" of our own. But Carlyle has not to encounter the suspicion of people as Chesterton must, and this I believe really for one great reason. Carlyle is solemn, he is heavy, he is awful. It may not be true in fact that he counselled a humble tobacconist, who confessed that she had not the particular brand that he asked for but had another quite as good, that "she should always deal in the eternal verities"—that may not be a true story, but it ought to be. Now Chesterton will not be solemn, and never is he so full of laughter and joy as when he is dealing with the most momentous things. Carlyle is always making his way towards some tremendous aphorism which shall embody the argument of a whole paragraph or chapter; whereas Chesterton is always making for some apparently frivolous instance or paradox.

Now I venture to say that just as the teaching of Carlyle—and this is true of all merely solemn minds—is much shallower than it looks, so that

the farther you go into it the less original or profound it is, so the teaching of Mr. Chesterton, gay and careless and ridiculous as it so frequently seems to be, is at the last always serious, and to anyone who knows the age in which we live, who knows what is being said and the conclusions which are being formed, his words will always have the effect of sending the spirit sounding on and on.

For the fact is you cannot do justice to Mr. Chesterton's humour and whimsicality, as an instrument for arriving at truth, until you take hold of this—that, in his view, the sense of humour, the happy way of looking at things, the faculty for joy, is an integral part of the human soul, having rights as inalienable as any other. In his fine paper in the volume on *Heretics*, in answer to Mr. M'Cabe's criticism that he ought to consider the intellectual problems of life more gravely, Chesterton deals at length with the charge, and almost on every page of his work he presents the same thesis. For example: "A man must be very full of faith to jest with his divinity. . . . To the Hebrew prophets, their religion was so solid a thing, like a mountain or a mammoth, that the irony of its contact with

trivial and fleeting things struck them like a blow." "Merriment is one of the world's natural flowers and not one of its exotics. Gigantesque levity, flamboyant eloquence, are the mere outbursts of a human sympathy and bravado as old and solid as the stars." "We should all like to speak poetry at the moments when we truly live; and if we do not speak it, it is because we have an impediment in our speech."

In his volume on Dickens he says a thing which must have been suggested not only by the reading of Dickens, but by observing the processes of his own mind. "Dickens," he says, "had to be ridiculous in order to begin to be true. His characters that begin solemn *end* futile; his characters that begin frivolous *end* solemn in the best sense. His foolish figures are not only more entertaining than his serious figures, they are also much more serious." We shall give an example of this in a moment.

Let us dwell for a little longer on this matter—I mean the medium of good-humour and gaiety and colloquialness which Chesterton uses, and cannot help using, in the interests of truth; and let us keep before ourselves the literary medium which by contrast Carlyle adopted. I should say

that the difference is just this: Carlyle, though by birth one of the common people, nevertheless speaks of the people or at the people from above. Chesterton, though by birth, as I should imagine, of a much higher rank, in all his writing and thinking speaks of the people from their own point of view, from the point of view which they would take up if they should ever become self-conscious and enlightened enough to express themselves. It is a definite charge which Chesterton makes against Carlyle, that he had no belief in the people, no belief in the elementary instincts of the masses of men; that he assumed that his message was in advance of them, that he could be nothing else than a voice crying in the wilderness. And so, rather than change the pitch of his voice, he remained in his wilderness, and in fact got rather to like being there. Now merely to be a prophet, merely to fling thunderbolts of truth at people, is, in essential matters, to have given up the whole business. Our Lord said of a great moral teacher of His day that he was *more* than a prophet: I believe He meant that he was a good man. "There are two main moral necessities for the work of a great man," says Chesterton, speaking of Carlyle: "the first is

that he should believe in the truth of his message ; the second is that he should believe in the acceptability of his message. It was the whole tragedy of Carlyle that he had the first and not the second. . . . It was this simplicity of confidence, not only in God, but *in the image of God*, that was lacking in Carlyle."

I seem to see everywhere in Chesterton, and this is in my own view the explanation of his entire literary manner, a kind of passion to be understood. His critics are perhaps quite right in saying that he chose his manner in order to startle people into reading him. I should not put it that way ; though I think there is something in it. Chesterton would hold, I believe, as indeed we have quoted, that whatever is true is a thing that should be known, and known by as many people as possible. Truth is public property. One of our human and social duties is to communicate the truth to one another. He would say that a man has not got hold of truth who sets out with the idea that people will not hear it. That, on the contrary, it is the first business of a man who has anything to say that he shall say it in such a way that the people, the common people, the people who are most

directly to be affected, shall become aware of it. A man gets a sight of truth not simply in order that he may embody it in words that please himself, but that he may embody it in such words as shall give it its greatest immediate reach ; and so Dante writes his *Divine Comedy* in the lingua franca, in the speech of the common people ; Luther translates the Bible into German ; and, if I may dare the comparison, Chesterton makes use of good-humour, ridiculous illustrations, in order, if you like to put it so, to get a hearing—in order, as I prefer to put it, to get his message delivered to the proper quarter. “There are those,” he says somewhere, “who declare that they have no doubt the Salvation Army is right in its aims, but they very much dislike its methods. On the other hand, I have my doubts about its aims, but I have no doubt at all about its methods ; these are obviously right.” For, he goes on to say, there must always be something corybantic about religion, about the announcement of truth. The conclusion of this whole matter we might put in an image, not of Chesterton’s own, but not unlike many a one of his.

If a man gets up on a lorry at a street corner and begins to hammer a huge gong so that

everybody is compelled to look in his direction ; if he lays down the gong and takes up a bell, and rings it violently so that a crowd gathers, you must not conclude that he is a mountebank. He may be a man who has something to say. He may indeed be one of those men to whom the world has all along owed so much, who imagine that unless the people who are passing stop and listen to him they will in various ways go to the devil. Recollecting the great and even tremendous figures in history, it is only fair to wait until we hear him say what he has to say ; not to condemn him by the grotesqueness of his appearance, remembering, say, John the Baptist ; or by something in his voice that jars ; but judging him, if we must judge him, by the manifest passion which, as he goes on speaking, begins to kindle within him and to sway his words, and by the fire which, by a profound and unconquerable affinity, begins to kindle in our hearts as we listen to him. For in our day also, as in the days of Elijah, fire is the sign of God.

Still working our way into the substance of Mr. Chesterton's philosophy, let me deal here—it can only be in a hurried way—with another feature of his work which has been declared to

be an offence. The common criticism of Chesterton is that he is always striving after paradox. That criticism, you observe, resolves itself into two separate charges. The first is, that he *strives*; the second is, that the conclusions at which he arrives are always paradoxical. With regard to the first—namely, that Chesterton *strives* after paradox—I think it very manifestly unfair. I am quite sure that, on the contrary, his greatest artistic difficulty is to keep back the paradoxes which are crowding down to the point of his pen. Mr. Chesterton never affects me as striving after anything. It often happens with him, indeed, that he sees what is going to be the conclusion of his reasoning long before he has quite established it, and down it goes in all its crudeness long before he has prepared us for it. But that he strives after such effects never once occurred to me. A man does not need to strive after that particular way of expressing himself which he has practised consistently in every line of his writing, extending now over as much literary matter as would fill a small library. It is quite as natural for him to be picturesque as it is for a great many of us—not to be. It is as natural for him to be violent and excessive and uproarious as it is for other writers

to be timid and futile and lady-like. It is as natural for him to arrive at paradoxes as it is for more solemn writers to arrive at platitudes. Indeed, there are perhaps only two conclusions to which all serious consideration of life can lead us—either to the uttering of a platitude, a truism, or to the uttering of a paradox, the discovery, *i.e.*, of a certain impassable chasm between subject and object, between things and the indomitable spirit of a man. I repeat, that what gives the impression of striving and posing to Chesterton's entire style is this: he sees at a glance the principle of the matter in hand, and then, without thinking further, embodies it in a very crude and haphazard illustration or figure. He knows—and it is this which makes his method quite legitimate—that if his *thought* is really right, then this illustration which he has created will bring out certain aspects or corroborations which he could not have stated with such concreteness of definition if he had restricted himself to the language of pure thought. There is nothing more characteristic of his style than this: that an image or figure which he has flung down begins to mean more and more for himself—begins to clarify his own intermediate processes, and to give edge and eloquence to his

contention. In this, as in many other matters, it is easy to trace the great influence of Browning upon Chesterton. Carlyle tells us, in one of his translations of Tieck, of a baron who needed to jump back and forward over a table in order to get himself into a good humour. Some men with the same object in view—I mean, in order to warm up their mind—take cold baths; some take hard walks over the hills; some drink strong coffee: Chesterton confronts his own mind with violent and unlikely situations. Let me give an illustration which, if we had time, we should find to cast light upon all these points, and especially upon this point, that Chesterton's mind works most easily under the stimulus of an apparently intractable metaphor or concrete illustration, and that the illustration which seems far-fetched, so that people accuse him of striving after it, begins to fall back again into the living context of the man's thought. "Suppose that a great commotion arises in the street about something, let us say a lamp-post which many influential persons desire to pull down. A grey-clad monk, who is the spirit of the Middle Ages, is approached upon the matter, and begins to say, in the arid manner of the Schoolmen, 'Let us first of all consider, my

brethren, the value of light. If light be in itself good. . . .’ At this point he is somewhat excusably knocked down. All the people make a rush for the lamp-post. The lamp-post is down in ten minutes, and they go about congratulating each other on their un-mediæval practicality. But as things go on, they do not work out so easily. Some people have pulled the lamp-post down because they wanted the electric light; some because they wanted old iron; some because they wanted darkness, because their deeds were evil; some thought it not enough of a lamp-post, some too much; some acted because they wanted to smash municipal machinery; some because they wanted to smash something. And there is war in the night, no man knowing whom he strikes. So gradually and inevitably—to-day, to-morrow, or the next day—there comes back the conviction that the monk was right after all, and that all depends on what is the philosophy of light. Only, what we might have discovered under the gas-lamp, we now must discuss in the dark” (*Heretics*).

I detect no evidence of striving, or posing, or intellectual levity in an illustration of that kind: and it is one of probably tens of thousands. I saw

that someone the other day wrote an article in a newspaper full of veiled disparagement of Chesterton. The writer insinuated that it was simply a kind of trick such as he himself and some other people could easily affect if they had the mind to. I recall that that was the very condition on which Charles Lamb said a certain man could write the plays of Shakespeare—"if he had had the mind." But seriously, I wish some of those modest men would come out of their hiding-places and augment the great tide of speculative joy and fundamental confidence in life which Mr. Chesterton has done so much to raise. I should say of most of us what he himself says of people who thought they could easily have written some of the easy-going but inevitable pages of Dickens: "Perhaps we could have created Mr. Guppy, but the effort would certainly have exhausted us: we should be ever afterwards wheeled about in a bath-chair at Bournemouth."

It is perfectly true that Chesterton sees truth in paradox; but it is no merely literary form with him. The style here is the man; and to Chesterton truth is found by beings such as we are, and placed as we are, only in the guise of paradox. I cannot attempt to justify Chesterton's position

here, or even to illustrate it, though if one had time it would be an easy matter to show that we are all quite familiar with what he means, and that it is our own habitual and unconscious attitude towards life and experience. But take, for example, such words as *faith* and *hope* and *love*. It is the very nature of *faith*, that it comes into play only with regard to matters which from certain other points of view and on other categories are unbelievable. There is and there must always be an opposition between the intuitions of faith and those materials and conclusions with which our merely intellectual faculty deals. The truth is, as Hegel said, "in a relationship." In this total world, there is room for faith as there is room for reason, but they deal with life on different grades, and with different ends in view. So the very nature of *hope*, which Mr. Chesterton so thoughtfully describes as "the irreducible minimum of the spirit," is that it goes beyond *experience*, and if need be contradicts experience. In Mr. Watts' well-known picture, what is "Hope"? It is the figure of a woman, blindfolded, sitting on the circle of the earth. In her hand she holds an instrument of music. She has struck one string, and it has broken at her touch; she has struck another, and

it too has snapped. One chord remains. It alone, it at last, must stand the strain and challenge of her touch. From it the music must come, else there is no music in this world at all. That is *hope*. Though one chord and another has given way, has snapped under the test; though only one thread remains as ground and reason for this invincible instinct of the soul, she prepares to strike, knowing that the last chord will *not* fail. So too, the very nature of *love* is, that it goes out towards the unlovely, towards those who at present seem incapable of appreciating or understanding love.

Paradox in literature has its counterpart in the antinomies of philosophy—which represent the farthest and deepest insight possible to us into the region of reality. Recollecting the ill-success which attended Mr. Haldane's ingenuous effort, on a recent and notorious occasion, to enlighten the mind of a Lord Chancellor on the antinomies of Free Will and Predestination, I shall not abuse your patience, though really the whole matter is not so very difficult. It is one which was very accurately appreciated by the religious people of Scotland for two centuries, and ought not to have been beyond the dialectical skill of Lord Halsbury.

I must content myself with repeating that paradox in literature is simply the expression of that apparent conflict between subject and object and yet that necessary relationship between subject and object which marks the boundary of our philosophical vision.

Now it is no part of Mr. Chesterton's ambition to remain in the clouds. Having discovered in the clouds the nature of paradox, or having pursued it into the clouds, having seen in the loneliness of his own most accomplished mind that truth must always have this paradoxical expression, he sees it everywhere, and discovers it to us, for our joy, and to keep off the dreadful tyranny of the merely scientific category. Taking the large question of life itself, he sees, like Tolstoy, like Carlyle, like every true and resolute thinker, that life is a much earlier thing than thought ; that we live before we reason ; that to this day the really great and characteristic things which we do, we do not at the dictate of our cool intellectual faculty, but in obedience to primitive and unfathomable instincts, appetites, desires, ideals, faiths. Seeing that this is so, Chesterton rejoices to point out to the soul of man its inviolable way of escape.

All this brings us, late perhaps, and circuitously,

to what we must call the message of Mr. Chesterton ; for, as he himself defines it, "paradox simply means a certain defiant joy which belongs to belief."

To put the matter in as short compass as possible, leaving it to be modified in our own minds as we proceed, Mr. Chesterton is the protagonist in our particular day of the natural man. He has been chosen by virtue of his temperament, by virtue of the fortunate emergence in him of certain primitive faculties which in most men of his condition have been rendered impotent or untrustworthy—he has been chosen to champion the rights of, so to call him, the average and catholic man. If the phrase were not so loaded with both a sinister and a merely affected connotation, we should say that his message is to call us back (or, as he would say, forward) to the joys and the duties and the faith of the natural life. The life of nature as man's sphere is, in Chesterton's view, something very different from a merely animal life, without social restraints or without those equally fundamental restraints which the wisdom of the race has discovered and approved. In his view, and as he himself might put it, the only thing in man which is as obstinate

as his love of liberty is his love of bondage. The only thing that man will do as inevitably as he will live a merely animal life, is that he will repent and put himself in irons. The only thing which is as true of man as that he is made of clay, is that into that clay, by some unfathomable mystery, a Holy God has infused something of His own. It is this *man* whose nature, which bears within itself traces of much besides its lower status, which bears within itself evidences of its long and hazardous journey, and of its difficult and precious enlightenment—it is this natural man, in the sense of *unsophisticated* man, whose total soul Chesterton celebrates and defends.

And arriving at the moment when he has arrived, Chesterton has acquired the quality of greatness. For a great man in these matters is a man who arrives at the right moment, who comes to the rescue of that in man which at the moment is threatened yet which must not be lost. I hail him as a great writer when I consider the great temptation of the hour with which he deals. That man in his measure is a great man whose word has the effect of reassuring us, just as that writer is a bad writer who disposes his readers to *succumb*. Anything is bad which disheartens

us on our predestined journey. Anything is bad which raises a suspicion as to the value of our existence. Anything is bad which would lead us to disparage the human enterprise. Anything is bad which would make us let our hands fall and our knees shake, face to face with our elementary duties and responsibilities, and face to face with our own ignorance and the darkness that lies about us. Anything is bad which makes us regret life. All laughter at man is hollow and of the devil. The account of man which is thrust upon us by a hasty and dogmatic materialism is, from the point of view of man's instincts, and from the point of view of the highest words he has ever obeyed, a form of laughter at man. As such it is bad, a thing it may even be to be put down one day, as witchcraft was put down, and for the same reason—that it is seducing man from his true and normal and natural life.

One general line of criticism which Chesterton applies to those tendencies in modern life and thought which in his view threaten that deposit of faith on which man has come thus far, is this. He convicts the opponent with whom he is dealing at the moment of neglecting some fact of the human soul which is just as trustworthy, just as

inalienable to man, as is the faculty on which the threatening theory is basing itself. In short, in Chesterton's view, the specialists are always wrong when they leave their own particular field and impose their methods on what he would call "the rich and reeking human personality." He would say: You cannot exhaust all the qualities of a man. You cannot really sum him up. You can only examine him in the abstract. But then he does not exist in the abstract. You can examine him only after he is dead. All your reports about man are therefore of the nature of post-mortem reports; they have nothing to say as to the very thing which is of most importance—life itself. This, which is true of man, considered physiologically, is true likewise of him considered as a sentient being. Take, for example, the nature of personal happiness, or joy. You may make out a list of circumstances which ought to ensure this joy; and you may be all wrong. You may surround a man, like Carlyle's shoeblack, with all those circumstances, and yet leave him miserable. You may see, on the other hand, a human being in rags and difficulties, with none of the circumstances which according to your inventory secure human joy. You may conclude that you are in

the presence of a miserable creature ; whereas you may be in the presence of one who is in love, and therefore delirious with human faith and confidence in the value of existence. Or you adduce your reasons for denying to man his imperishable confidence in a will beyond his own—in short, in God. You may forecast his inevitable doom, to perish like the beasts ; but

“Just when you’re safest, there is a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one’s death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides ;
And that’s enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as Nature’s self. . . .”

Chesterton would test every theory or proposition by its fitness to satisfy, or to control for a higher exercise, some ineradicable endowment of man—of man as we know him, in his glory and gloom alike, but above everything in his altogether divine perseverance in life. He would arraign all systems which invade man’s sanctuary of feeling and desire and faith, as he would arraign a brother man accused of some crime against man’s nature or the social compact—he would arraign them all before a jury of common men.

“The trend of our epoch up to this time has been consistently towards specialism and professionalism. We tend to

have trained soldiers because they fight better, trained singers because they sing better, trained dancers because they dance better, especially instructed laughers because they laugh better, and so on and so on. The principle has been applied to law and politics by innumerable modern writers. Many Fabians have insisted that a greater part of our political work should be performed by experts. Many legalists have declared that the untrained jury should be altogether supplanted by the trained judge.

“Now if this world of ours were really what is called reasonable, I do not know that there would be any fault to find with this. But the true result of all experience and the true foundation of all religion is this—that the four or five things that it is most practically essential that a man should know are all of them what people call paradoxes. That is to say, that though we all find them in life to be mere plain truths, yet we cannot easily state them in words without being guilty of seeming verbal contradictions. One of them, for instance, is the unimpeachable platitude that the man who finds most pleasure for himself is often the man who least hunts for it. Another is the paradox of courage: the fact that the way to avoid death is not to have too much aversion to it. Whoever is careless enough of his bones to climb some hopeless cliff above the tide may save his bones by that carelessness. Whoever will lose his life, the same shall save it: an entirely practical and prosaic statement.

“Now one of these four or five paradoxes which should be taught to every infant prattling at his mother’s knee is the following: That the more a man looks at a thing the less he can see it, and the more a man learns a thing the less he knows it. The Fabian argument of the expert, that the man who is trained should be the man who is trusted, would be absolutely unanswerable if it were really true that a man who studied a thing and practised it every day went on seeing more and more of its significance. But he does not. He goes on see-

ing less and less of its significance. In the same way, alas, we all go on every day, unless we are continually goading ourselves into gratitude and humility, seeing less and less of the significance of the sky or the stones.

"Now it is a terrible business to mark a man out for the vengeance of men. But it is a thing to which a man can grow accustomed, as he can to other terrible things: he can even grow accustomed to the sun. And the horrible thing about all legal officials, even the best, about all judges, magistrates, barristers, detectives, and policemen, is not that they are wicked (some of them are good), not that they are stupid (several of them are quite intelligent)—it is simply that they have got used to it.

"Strictly, they do not see the prisoner in the dock: all they see is the usual man in the usual place. They do not see the awful court of judgment: they only see their own workshop. Therefore the instinct of Christian civilisation has most wisely declared that into their judgments there shall upon every occasion be infused fresh blood and fresh thoughts from the street. Men shall come in who can see the court and the crowd, the coarse faces of the policemen and the professional criminals, the wasted faces of the wastrels, the unreal faces of the gesticulating counsel, and see it all as one sees a new picture or a ballet hitherto unvisited.

"Our civilisation has decided, and very justly decided, that determining the guilt or innocence of men is a thing too important to be trusted to trained men. If it wishes for light upon that awful matter, it asks men who know no more law than I know, but who can feel the things that I felt in the jury-box. When it wants a library catalogued, or the solar system discovered, or any trifle of that kind, it uses up its specialists. But when it wishes anything done which is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing round. The same thing was done, if I remember right, by the Founder of Christianity."

Mr. Chesterton, like every other who would aid the human soul, has not delivered his message in so many philosophical principles. He does not speak or write *in vacuo*, but with his eye upon some threatening spirit of our time. And—at least so it seems to me—he has a faultless eye for the moment when any tendency is beginning to assail the abiding interest of man. Therefore he has been compelled to deliver his message in the way of criticism and opposition to tendencies in thought or speculation, and in life, which seem to him likely to seduce man from the main highway of healthy and natural and believing life on which alone he is equal to himself and secure. Even as the angel measured the foundations of the Heavenly Jerusalem, so Chesterton measures and tests the principles, the effects for man's present moral practice and his outlook, of certain ways of looking at life—he tests them all “according to the measure of a man, *i.e.* of the angel.” And therein also lies his confidence. The human soul he sees too firmly rooted in essential things, too firmly persuaded of the essential good of life, to be disturbed for more than a period from its true career. As Abraham Lincoln said—and it is the very quality of all

great words to serve greater causes than their first cause—"you may deceive some people all the time, and all the people for some time; but never all the people all the time."

Man has seen what he has seen; and never can he be as though he had not seen it. And, Chesterton would add, man has seen Christ; and would rejoice with the dying Marius in Pater's great work (Pater, whom alone, as it seems to me, Chesterton does less than justice to), that in Jesus Christ there has been erected in this world a plea, a standard, an afterthought which mankind will always have in reserve against any wholly mean or mechanical theory of himself and his conditions.

In the course of his intellectual career so far, Chesterton has dealt with some of the chief doctrines for man which have been urged upon us in the name of enlightenment during the last generation. "Heresies" he calls these doctrines; and this not because they conflict with the theological propositions of the Church, but because, if accepted, they would seduce and ultimately destroy the soul of man as it has come to be and as we know it. Pessimism, with its strange and insane joy in its own success, he finds tolerable as

a system of thought only so long as you take care that it never be translated into life and action ; for if pessimism be true, then death is the only proper pursuit of man. "The popularity of pure and unadulterated pessimism is," he says, "an oddity. It is almost a contradiction in terms. Men would no more receive the news of the failure of existence or of the harmonious hostility of the stars with ardour or popular rejoicing than they would light bonfires for the arrival of cholera, or dance a breakdown when they were condemned to be hanged."

"The pessimists who attack the universe are always under this disadvantage : they have an exhilarating consciousness that they could make the sun and moon better ; but they also have the depressing consciousness that they could not make the sun and moon at all."

The fact is, those who write thus gloomily about life considered as a whole, are usually comfortable above the average lot in some particular of their life which they take care not to lose. "Existence has been *praised* and *absolved* by a chorus of pessimists. The work of giving thanks to heaven is, as it were, ingeniously divided among them. . . . Omar Khayyám is

established in the cellar and swears that it is the only room in the house. . . . Even the blackest of pessimistic writers enjoys his art. At the precise moment that he has written some shameless and terrible indictment of creation, his one pang of joy in the achievement joins the universal chorus of gratitude with the scent of the wild flower and the song of the bird."

It is because Atheism conflicts with an instinct of the soul which has been enticed and corroborated and purified by human experience, that Chesterton assails it and predicts its failure to tyrannise over men. It is because a doctrinaire Socialism is contrary to the heights and depths of man's soul, because it would restrict man to a tame paddock, man who has something in him which hungers for the risks of hazardous and unequal living, that Chesterton has no fear that it will ever be embraced. It is because Evolution is really the enemy of Revolution, and because, were it accepted as the whole truth that we are *fated* to rise in the scale, we should all sit down and wait either until we were raised, or cast aside to make room for another's rising, that Chesterton is afraid of *Evolution*. It is because Puritanism lays emphasis upon the spirit in man,

that he celebrates its great service to our country. It is because Puritanism neglects the flesh that he condemns it. It is because Mediævalism and Æstheticism find their happiness in looking backwards, and thus cease to make for that total victory of the race which if it is to be anywhere must lie in front of us ; it is because many writers do not see that in their little plans and purposes for men they are often playing with fire, tampering, as Stevenson says, with the lock which holds down all sorts of sulphurous and subterranean things—that Chesterton lays about him with the ancient sword of the spirit.

And now, I must content myself with having written these things in appreciation of one whom I consider a very great and constructive force, altogether on the side of man, which is eventually on the side of God. Recalling his general line of criticism, I should say it is what pedants would call an *argumentum ad hominem*. Personally I have always held that on matters of prime human importance no other argument tells in the long run except the *argumentum ad hominem*. “Humanly speaking,” a student began. “My dear sir,” said his professor, “there’s no other way of speaking.”

When Tennyson protests against the materialistic doctrine of man, he protests in the name of a warm and instinctive desire for the contrary. His heart, he tells us, rises up like a man in wrath. In fact, he simply won't have it. And really no theory will ever establish itself in the mind of man if his gorge simply rises against it. When Darwin's *Descent of Man* was at the height of its popularity, George Gilfillan, a popular preacher of that time in Dundee, voiced the opposition in quite a happy phrase. "I won't have a monkey for my grandfather," said the good man. Now I venture to think that there is something in the protest which will always be invincible. And really it is something more than the recoil of the spirit from a proposed degradation. It is good science likewise. The really important thing for us is not, Where did we come from? but, Where are we bound for?

We may have had the lowliest of origins. The Bible confesses we are made from the dust; though it declares that it was God who made us. The point is, here we are, and we are not tired of rising, if we may, in the scale. Now there must always have been something in us like a coiled-up spring which urged us on so far, leaving many

things behind which belonged to our more lowly lot.

When the present German Emperor showed himself able to dispense with Prince Bismarck, when, in Sir John Tenniel's phrase, "he dropped the pilot," we all concluded that there was something in the German Emperor, both as a man and as a ruler of men, which made him equal to that. It is quite a fair thing to say, by the same token, that there must always have been something in man, something which was only awaiting its opportunity, that enabled man, in a word, to drop his tail.

Number Nine of the King's Regulations for Officers of the Navy contains these words: "Every officer is to refrain from making remarks or passing criticisms on the conduct or orders of his superiors which may tend to bring them into contempt, and is to avoid saying or doing anything which might discourage the men or render them dissatisfied with their condition or with the service on which they are or may be employed."

Chesterton sees the human soul, arrived thus far—not without difficulty. He sees that any fundamental health which we have is due to the power which is still within us of the Christian

tradition as it gives an issue and a consecration to the fountain of our natural life.

And anyone who seriously interferes with the foundations of the soul, with the particular kind of hardihood which has become intertwined for ever with the Cross of Christ, Chesterton sees as a rebel or a traitor—as a heretic in the sublime sense. And because as such he is poisoning the wells of all sane and hearty living, and cutting man off from his Source, like the great Florentine, Chesterton would appoint him a place in hell.

VI

THE SENSE OF SIN IN GREAT LITERATURE

INTRODUCTORY

MY object in the papers which follow immediately is to get down beneath the surface of our life. And the route which I am going to take is to follow in the track of some strenuous thinker who, it seems to us, as we consider everything, was fated, it may even have been from all eternity, to taste a certain moral loneliness, and to report.

Out of the heart of a people there is thrust forth from time to time one who by virtue of his sensitiveness and experience feels things which we who are of duller apprehension had not seen, or had forgotten. And yet we are so made that when a man of true insight, of an insight cleansed and certified by suffering, tells us what he saw and what he felt, there is

something within us which acknowledges his story, and recognises that in some real way it is our story, and that we are no longer living honourably, if, having heard that story, it should be denied its proper influence with us.

I have entitled these studies: "The Sense of Sin in Great Literature."

Now, though I have no wish to dally over words, I should like to say what, from the standpoint of these studies, great literature shall be held to be. By great literature I mean, now, literature which has dealt with the human soul at such a depth and with such purity and thoroughness of vision that what it has said is true, and will be recognised as true by serious souls in all times.

In my own view and belief, all great literature is confessional. Every really great work of art is the display of personality. This is not to say that in a great poem or drama, for example, the writer is giving us the facts of his own life; but it is to say that in a great poem or drama the writer is isolating some mood or feeling or moral discovery of his own, and is there brooding over it, pursuing the implications of it, tracking the roots and principles of it, until his own heart and flesh cry out with a cry which means that

in the last agony of his thinking the man has found nothing ; or that in the last agony of his thinking he has found God.

When the children of Israel were crossing the Jordan on their first entry into Canaan, Joshua summoned them one by one to take an oath of allegiance to the God who had so far prospered them. This they did. But before dismissing the assembled people, Joshua, we read, erected a stone in the presence of them all, and said, "This stone hath heard your vow. Therefore it shall stand there for ever as a witness against you, lest you deny your God."

The kind of literature I am thinking of is that kind of disclosure of the soul which, because it was given once upon a time, remains for ever as an afterthought, a plea, a standard to hold man to his destiny. For man will not consent for more than a time to be less than he has been ; and that is not enlightenment, it is not, properly speaking, progress, which proposes for us a poorer moral career. Great literature, then, I shall take to mean that literature which deals with the soul of man as the home of great issues, as the meeting-place of the seen and the Unseen, of

the occupations of time and the recurring pre-occupation of eternity.

I know that in speaking so pointedly about the sense of sin I may be thought to be dealing with matters which are really not present to people's minds in our day. We had recently the *obiter dictum* of one of our most versatile men, himself no enemy of faith, that "men are not worrying about their sins." But that might very well be reason enough for some things being said which should have the effect of reviving that noble disquietude. And besides, we must not be guided by what men, who have their own interests and preoccupations, perceive or do not perceive. We must be guided by what we believe to be there, whether men are thinking about it or not thinking about it.

It is a very silly thing to say that "men in our day are not worrying about their sins," if you mean by that, that therefore they are not to be worried, or that they have somehow got beyond the need for worrying. On the contrary, it should be held to be a very alarming moral and social symptom that men are not now worrying over matters which have undoubtedly worried men in all times, as often as men have looked

themselves in the soul. St. Paul in his day was aware that great masses of people were not worrying about their sins. He spoke of them as being "past feeling." But that is a condition which no true man will regard as a desirable one for himself. It is also a condition which no far-seeing man will welcome as a sound one for society. To say that men in our day are not worrying about their sins, is to say that men are satisfied with themselves and satisfied with things as they are. And that is simply to say that such men are no longer men, no longer the instruments of God for better things; which, if history in the long-run means anything, means that the Mysterious Force whose very being and passion it is to heighten and intensify the Spirit in man, will one day take from these decadent souls their high responsibility.

I say, we are to be guided not by what seems the spirit of the time. We are to be guided by what is there all the time. To take an illustration from a disaster, the terror of which time may have so softened as to make the allusion not too poignant. As the *Titanic* tore through the dark waters on that April night two years ago, the passengers and the crew were

not worrying about ice. A thousand things contributed to their gaiety and absence of care. The bright lights, the general opulence, the hearty faces, the music, the long tradition of safety ; or, if one bethought himself for a moment, there were the life-boats and the life-belts. And besides, the night was calm. Why then should anyone worry? And no one did worry. Yet the terrible thing was there : and all the time the ship was rushing to meet its unequal, inexorable foe. But consider this also : earlier in the day which led up to that disastrous night, a message had been borne to the vessel not yet doomed ; for ships and souls are not yet doomed so long as they have the faculty of hearing. That message, that report and rumour out of the vast sea, had reached the ship—had fallen indeed upon the ear of one whose very function it was to hear. We might without violence use words which St. Paul used of the souls of men and say that God did not leave that ship without witness.

Well, “we mortals cross this ocean of a world each in the average cabin of a life.” As we voyage on,—and surely this which is the high interpretation of great literature is the true one,—from time to time, by the way of elected souls,

voices are heard, the presence of threatening shapes is disclosed, and they, captains of the soul, have it imposed upon them, so that it is a fire in their bones if they do not speak out, to declare what they have heard and to testify what they have seen.

But I do not believe that "men to-day are not worrying about their sins." I can well believe that an immense number of people are not thinking about their sins; though even there I am probably quite at fault. But even were it true that an immense number of people are not thinking about their sins, it is equally true that there is an immense number of people, it may even be the same people, who are not thinking about anything, because they are not thinking at all. But this is nothing new or singular. *Every man who thinks finds that he has to think for others besides himself. Every man who is living a spiritual life at all is carrying in his soul the care of some others. And if there are immense numbers who are not thinking seriously about life and about how things are going, the responsibility is simply the greater that those who are morally sensitive shall in a day of unusual carelessness be the more faithful to their scruples.*

But, I repeat, I do not believe that in our day men are not worrying about their sins. If the literature of our time is in any faithful way the mirror of men's souls, the one preoccupation and concern to-day is just the ancient moral concern.

It is true that one may have to listen carefully, and to see the immediate aspect of things in the light of history, to perceive in the moral anarchy of our time anything with a high significance. Besides, there are times in which a mood of revolt descends upon a people and acquires such a head and volume that no good comes of mere argument. You might in literal truth as profitably argue with a bull which has begun to charge. We must wait and see, in the sense that we must simply wait until other people see what we for ourselves saw all the time.

The last generation has witnessed what seems to us an unusually strong and thoroughgoing criticism of the traditional morality. The nature of the soul has been put to the test. Experiments in living have been urged and followed which disputed the rulings and findings of the former time. We have been invited in the name of liberty and proper manhood to set out, to discover for ourselves the nature of this world

and our own nature. To find out whether there is a limit in the nature of things, or, as we should say, in God, to the self-seeking and ruthlessness of the individual. But already, as I verily believe, signs are beginning to appear of the return upon the soul of those ancient misgivings which may one day fling men, even in a kind of panic, upon the breast of the ancient faith.

For the fact is, we men and women who are living in these days were in a sense not born in these days. The blood of our race is in us. The blood of humanity is in us. The reminiscence is there in our blood like a shadow, the reminiscence of great perils just escaped, of great disasters from which only with pain and the beating of the breast we have arisen. It was never for a moment to be believed that the race of man had learned nothing through all its long travail; or that its wisdom, embodied in its laws and in its pieties, had no objective and reasonable reality. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that, when any experiment in living which repudiates that hard-won wisdom of the race has gone a certain length, something should reawaken in the human soul which protests that it shall go no further, for at the point at which it

has arrived it seems to be reminded by dim intangible portents that once before it occupied that perilous ground and came within sight of some huge terror.

In his great literature the soul of man has gone out all alone to face, without the distractions which we average men allow to obscure our vision, the limits and barriers of the moral world. Certain elect and predestined men have stood upon lonely promontories of the Spirit looking across sad waters. They have seen what they have seen and they have reported it to us. And so far as their soul has been truly human, and so far as they have kept their eyes upon the facts and have not spared themselves, they have with varying degrees of clearness and authority corroborated the testimony of Him who, in full self-consciousness, tasted death and touched the bottom and last limit of human experience and personality.

These elect and priestly souls, who have spoken in great literature, have assured us that the deepest and last thing about man is, that there is a way by which he must go, that he bears to a Holy God a relation which cannot be dissolved.

I. "THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER"

If my purpose were purely literary, I should occupy myself with quotations and recollections from the wonders of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. My object rather is to allow the poem to speak for itself, to make its own proper impression upon our moral nature. I believe it is by some such form of words as that, that we may maintain the balance in the controversy between art and morals. It is probably true, on the whole, that art must not have a conscious moral motive. On the other hand, the human soul is so subtle and swift-glancing that you must not put a limit to its resources. It would be easy to accept the saying, "art for art's sake," if it were not so manifest that every supreme work of art—in sculpture, in painting, in music, in literature—has an effect upon us in addition to its effect of beauty. We understand and can sympathise with the feelings of impatience and proper pride which led to the protest underlying the phrase, "art for art's sake." It must have seemed to sincere and eager spirits a sordid thing to see art hiring herself out to the support of conventional views of life, thereby depressing her own vitality

because thereby allowing the world of interests to divert and make oblique what should have been her steadfast gaze. And so at the rallying cry of this phrase there was a movement on the other side which, because it was a movement and self-conscious, was sure to do equal violence to the truth of things. Men of fine sensibility, jealous for the independence and freedom of art, made their protest against the relation which they found existing in their day between art and morals. But in most cases the way they took to make their protest was by devoting their art to the other side of the moral issue. This, of course, was really to be guilty of the very offence from which in their view art needed to be purged. The only difference was that, from being the servant of moral convention, art became the servant of want of convention. Now, as St. Paul once said, "circumcision availeth nothing"; but he added, "neither doth uncircumcision."

It is an old controversy: and yet the truth of the matter is perhaps simple enough. Art should be sincere. Or better still, artists should be sincere men. If we must not look to them to support conventional morality, we ought to look to them not to support what Carlyle used to call Bedlam,

either for the fun of the thing, or still less for the money there may be in the business.

A great man who is expressing himself in a picture or in a poem, or, if I may say so, in a sermon, is not thinking of anything except how he shall not pervert or qualify the flood of truth which somehow has been let loose within him. The moment he becomes self-conscious, the moment he permits other considerations even to whisper to him, in that moment he has, obscurely it may be, but quite patently in the judgment of his peers, cut himself off from the source and home of all truth and beauty and power.

That is what I meant when I said some time ago that all truly great literature is confessional. It is that quality in great literature—that it is confessional—and not that it supports or impugns the moral code of our time, which gives great literature an influence in the region of the Will. It is not that the writer, the poet, or the dramatist, or the teller of a tale, sets out with the object of influencing us in any way. What happens is, that the poet, or the dramatist, or the teller of the tale, has himself been so moved, so unified in the depths of his life, by the intensity and logic of his own imagination, that his words reach down in us

to that precise depth from which they proceeded in him. And so great literature—and the same is true of every medium of spiritual expression—great literature cannot but have a moral influence upon us; for it has borne witness to the depth and spirituality of our human nature. When we read or witness a great tragedy, it may very well be that no single moral scruple in our soul has been fortified, but our whole soul has been renewed, purified by pity or by terror. We close the book, or we come out into the night, with something of that double assurance, whose presence indeed makes us truly human: we are sure of our own soul, and if we are not sure of God, we are sure at least that it is a very serious thing to live, that we live in a world of relationships.

Now, instead of working my way through these things, I might have been employed more wisely in expounding the wonderful poem which gives indeed such pointed illustration of what I have been saying.

You will read in any text-book that Coleridge and Wordsworth inaugurated the Romantic movement in English literature. You may learn there further that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

or something that was to be like it, was deliberately planned by those two great poets. As things turned out, the poem came to be written entirely by Coleridge, though Wordsworth supplied a fine couplet and suggested the Albatross. But when you have learned these odds and ends, you have learned nothing of real consequence. It is practically true, for example, of Coleridge and Wordsworth that, in the words of the *Ancient Mariner* himself, "they were the first that ever burst into that silent sea." But why did they set out? Why did they break away from the recognised materials and methods of the eighteenth century? Why, when they felt compelled to set out, did they take the line they took? Why, confining ourselves to Coleridge and to this poem, could he not escape, he who was so apt to refuse a task which was likely to make a demand upon him—why could he not escape such a subject as this? And how did it come to pass that, once launched upon this poem, his soul seems to us to be under a doom to penetrate to all the subtleties and horrors of such a thing of the spirit? The simple fact is, and we only deceive ourselves if we try to get behind it, about every great work of art—that is to say, of

self-expression—there is something mysterious, inexplicable, fated, “and he who can explain it least is he by whose hand it was done.”

“A creative work stands apart and remains mute when we question its ancestry.” “It is a very suggestive fact that Goethe could never explain many things in *Faust*. The origin of the work itself was as mysterious to him as to everyone else. It is easy enough to indicate the sources of the legend and of many of the incidents woven into it; but what affinity lodged this seed in the soil of his nature, what were the stages by which it sank deep into his soul and became so thoroughly part of himself that it came forth from his brain not only re-fashioned, amplified, harmonised with itself in artistic consistency, but pervaded by a soul which made it significant of profound and universal truth? . . . ‘They come and ask,’ writes Goethe, ‘what idea I meant to embody in my *Faust*, as if I knew myself.’

“For more than sixty years the drama was on his mind; and yet he tells us that the whole poem rose before him at once when it first touched his imagination. He often spoke of the progress of the work: there are indeed few works of art concerning the shaping and evolution of which

we possess such full and trustworthy information ; and yet of the first contract between the idea and his own soul, all he can tell us is that it was suddenly and completely disclosed to his imagination " (Mabie, *Essays on Literary Interpretation*).

In all this, great literature approaches to the passivity of nature. It offers to us levels and depths of interpretation equal to the level and depth of our own soul. You may take the poem as a temporary tract against cruelty to animals ; and even from that point of view it will always deserve attention. But, if you are so minded, if life has laid your soul open to such a world of ideas, the poem may be to you and will be to you another of those utter and unflinching portrayals of what happens when a man has done something wrong, irreparable, and when the wrong he has done comes back upon him, so that he sees nothing else in all the world except that wrong thing. Of course, you may say, " But no man should take his sins so seriously as the Ancient Mariner took his shooting of the Albatross." And you and I may decide for ourselves that we shall not take ours so seriously. Still, as the Psalmist said, " we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that my soul knoweth right well."

We never know in what mysterious ways some little thing which we have been able to make light of, and almost forget, is going to start up like an armed man, and stand before us blocking our way, until we trample it down and deliberately choose hell, or allow its accusation to compel us to our knees, where we must remain until we find, each one for himself, some reason for rising, in God and in a new depth and softness of our soul.

Emerson has a noble passage where, illustrating the indomitable perseverance of man, he describes a race who build and rebuild their homes on the slopes of a volcano. In the great poems of the soul, we may all learn on the surface of what unquiet moral elements we take our liberties.

I have been reading recently a volume entitled *The Eighteen Nineties*, a book which describes with sympathy and justice the wonderful outburst of youth in literature some twenty years ago. I am not speaking of the excellence of the work done by the men of that movement; and I am not doubting but that in the long-run the change of air may prove to have been good even for our spiritual life; but as an experiment in living it was a movement which failed and will fail.

It was all true enough for those who said the

things which they said at the stage at which they were when they said them. But it was no way of life for people who were going to get old, or were to have little children, or having little children were to lose them. They wrote and advocated views, those young men, as though they had it in their own power to control the subtle and inevitable reactions of the soul within them. They did not lay their account with that traditional life—the sum, within the breast of every man, of all that the soul has seen and been—that traditional life which, like the turbulent element beneath volcanoes, was bearing them all the time that they were making their futile and provincial proposals. And yet already in that book the ground has begun to rock, and here and there the old terror has burst from the ancient depth of things, and men are on their knees who in the headlong days of their youth had despised themselves for having knees.

“I’ve taken my fun where I’ve found it,
And now I must pay for my fun.”

“And the end of it’s settin’ and thinkin’.” There was one of them—he has left behind him a mass of strange drawings like the work of Blake. He died at twenty-six. In his last days

he became a Christian. Aye, there's the rub! It is all very well if a man is never to know better. But if one day he comes to know better, why then a moral upheaval is as certain as the thing which happens when a mine is fired. Indeed that is the very formula for the coming of truth to a man or to an age: it is the firing of a mine. In his last days, this young man became a Christian, and was received into the Church. Whereupon a terror took hold on him. Oh, unreasonable if you will, exaggerated, something that took advantage of his bodily weakness! Yes, that may all be true. But it was everything to him who endured it. Out there in the last lucidity of his soul it was the one thing. "I implore you," he wrote, "I implore you to destroy all copies of (naming a work of his) and all like drawings that are harmful. Show this to (naming a friend), and conjure him to do the same. By all that is holy, all obscene drawings." Then he signed his name, adding the words, "In my death agony."

We none of us know how we are going to behave, what terrible misgivings are one day going to be let loose by some event. We know within limits what we are, surrounded by the

interests, the faces, the habits which go some way towards the making up of our life. But we all know likewise that there is something wild and unpredictable within us. Concerning this thing it is a great part of my own personal religion that in every set of circumstances into which I may plunge or drift in this world or in any world, Christ, whom I invoke daily, may take hold of that interior life of mine and maintain for me my personal identity and chosen spiritual order. For no man can say how he will behave, were life to drive him into that lonely sea through which the Ancient Mariner voyaged. No one knows what visions will yet assail him, and what moral terrors, based it may be upon tiny scruples like inverted pyramids (what terrors), may one day shake his soul.

Here is the story as Coleridge himself repeated it on the margin of the poem.

PART I.

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

The Wedding-Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music ; but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

The land of ice and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen. Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.

And lo ! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice.

The Ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen.

PART II.

His shipmates cry out against the Ancient Mariner for killing the bird of good luck.

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

The fair breeze continues ; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the Ancient Mariner:

In sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

PART III.

The Ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

At its nearer approach it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

A flash of joy.

And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun.

The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and
no other on board the skeleton-ship.

Like vessel, like crew !

Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the
ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the
Ancient Mariner.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

At the rising of the Moon,

One after another,

His shipmates drop down dead.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the
Ancient Mariner.

PART IV.

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is
talking to him ;

But the Ancient Mariner assureth him of his
bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible
penance.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

And envieth that they should live, and so
many lie dead.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the
dead men.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth
towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that

still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Their beauty and their happiness.

He blesseth them in his heart.

The spell begins to break.

PART V.

By grace of the holy Mother, the Ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired, and the ship moves on;

But not by the souls of the men, nor by demons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

The lonesome Spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-dæmons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong ; and two of them relate one to another that penance long and heavy for the Ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

PART VI.

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance ; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

The supernatural motion is retarded ; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

The curse is finally expiated.

And the Ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,
And appear in their own forms of light.

PART VII.

The Hermit of the Wood

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

The Ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

The Ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the

Hermit to shrieve him ; and the penance of life falls on him.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land.

And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to things that God made and loveth.

That is the story. The moral authority of it lies just here, that we cannot read it or hear it read without the sense that in some region, remote indeed from our accustomed interests but close to us and of the deepest consequence, it is all true, nay that it is all the truth. There is a sense in which it is what it is to us. If there is anyone to whom it all means nothing, then in that one's case nothing more is to be said. That he feels nothing when other people feel something, is his own personal problem.

For there are those for whom the story does mean something on the moral plane, and indeed means nothing else, and must be permitted to mean nothing further until the moral demand of it is confessed. Well, there it is. The soul of a man once saw all that. And he has enabled us to see it. Out upon that lonely, inalienable

life of our own we have seen his signal and have signalled back to him.

We have heard a story. And this is the immense responsibility of seeing truth: it is left to us one by one, who have heard such a story, to act and take up our life henceforward as people must who by the illumination of such a story have now become aware of certain things; as people for whom it means what it means.

II. "PEER GYNT"

It is the customary thing to say that Ibsen in *Peer Gynt* set himself to hold up the mirror to the moral countenance of his native Norway. Here, however, as elsewhere, the insight of genius, like the word of God, is never of merely private interpretation. Peer Gynt is not simply a Norwegian of our time; he is a man of all time. The poet has grasped the principle of his life so deeply, has with such fairness and inevitableness pursued what may have seemed to Peer Gynt himself to be casual and irrelevant words, imaginations, actions, to their one source in his ultimate nature, that in writing the play *Peer Gynt* Ibsen has declared from the housetops the

secret of many hearts. For, once again, we men and women have come a long way, and have in the course of our voyage seen many things by land and sea. We have trafficked in strange merchandise. The reminiscences of infinitely various experiences lurk within us, written, as it were, on the tablets of our heart, in invisible ink. And at the challenge of a deep-seeing report concerning any one human soul, the hidden characters in every human heart stand out.

I am quite sure that if *Peer Gynt* had a fair chance, it would do an enormous moral service. In spite of its apparent richness and complexity, it is a simple drama. The very opening words, "Peer, you're lying!" put the clue into our hands at the outset. All that follows is the movement towards that particular moral crisis (and to the solution of it, if there is in the drama such a solution) in which an essentially shifty and plausible human soul is at last confronted with the truth about itself.

It is a work also which should appeal to men of what is called a practical turn of mind, who may not take seriously the moral challenge of such poetry as deals with the troubles and embarrassments of rarer souls. I can overhear a

man saying, "Hamlet! 'to be or not to be!' What moonshine! The man had far too little to do! These dreamers and poets only put ideas into people's heads." Now Peer Gynt is a practical man in the sense that he is one of those men who, having set his heart upon something, tries to get it. If scruples arise in his mind as to whether or not what he is doing or has done is right, he has an inexhaustible faculty for dodging the moral point and slurring it over with that rhetoric of self-support and self-justification for which we all have a perilous facility. Of course, he has his deeper moments as we all have, even the most prosaic, when we suspect that the kind of thing which we try to make light of as poetry, as imagination, as dreaming, may after all be the truth and the thing with which we have to do.

I once walked over the island of Rousay in the Orkney group. It stands sheer out of the sea like a table, a green and pleasant island. The sun was shining in a cloudless sky that day; and yet it would have been disastrous to keep one's eyes too much above the earth. For again and again one came to a narrow slit or crack where, looking down, one saw the sea wriggling

like a snake some hundreds of feet beneath. In his successful and outrageous career Peer Gynt comes to such slits and cracks in his own chosen scheme of things. Of course he does things which we who dwell in cities cannot do. But these are not of the essence of his moral history. The essence of his moral history is something which we have in common with him, something certainly which offers itself to us all. No one knows better than Peer Gynt himself what precisely is that fundamental fault. He did not regard it as a fault: he simply regarded it as a fact. Sometimes he boasted of it. Sometimes he simply accepted it as part of himself, as he accepted the mountains as part of the world. There were moments when he was ashamed of it. And at the last he cried out in terror to be delivered from it.

And now what was this last fact or bias in Peer Gynt's soul which, and not circumstance, ordered his life and, to say no more, put his eternal destiny in hazard? Well, after all, no one knows us so well as we know ourselves. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord": and more than once did Peer Gynt himself put his finger with absolute precision upon his own

weak spot. For example, once upon a time, when he was in hiding in the forest, after one of his early misdemeanours, he sees a boy carrying a scythe. The boy looks about him stealthily to make sure that he is not observed, and then with the scythe *cuts off his own finger*. He wraps up his bleeding hand and disappears. Peer Gynt understands everything. It is a boy who in fear or hatred of the national conscription has maimed himself so that he may escape as disqualified. Pondering the incident, Peer sees with perfect clearness that it is just a thing like that that he could never bring himself to do. Like that boy, he also might hate conscription and take means to escape it; but it never, never would be such means. He might think of such means. Yes, he probably would: for it was a well-known, much-used way of avoiding the military service. He would certainly think of it.

“Ay, wish it done,—will it to boot,—
But do it!—No, that’s past my understanding.”

There you have the moral formula for this man: *he will never go through a thing, but round about it*. He will never stand up to the consequences of his own acts. He will not act unless he has

already conceived the consequences and discounted them, not by the energy and fidelity of his own soul, but by making sure of a back door, a line of retreat, a bridge. Rather than look into the face of those moral realities which visit him, he will fell trees, as another man might play hard at golf, or he will drink, or he will whip up his own jaded passions, or he will intoxicate himself with lies of his own imagining, or he will assume the very consolations of religion as though they had been specially intended for him. Peer Gynt will not go straight. He will not think straight: and straight thinking is a formula for righteousness. Whenever a situation is becoming too hot for him, he will leave it. Whenever his own thoughts are becoming too sombre and close-fitting, he will think of something else. He will never cut off his finger—for anything, either good or bad. He will not endure the knife of reality even for the sake of the integrity and thoroughness of his soul. And yet, all the time, except in those moments when he sees through himself and knows that with all his tricks he is merely postponing a painful interview,—all the time he takes pride in this mastery of himself, as he calls it,—that he is above those scruples and interior

judgments which stultify weaker men. He calls this "being himself," and "being emperor of himself," when the fact is, he is all the time afraid of himself. He even allows himself to believe that he is fighting his own battle and bearing the consequences of his own acts, whereas the fact is, his whole path is strewn with sorrow, which falls, not upon himself, but upon those like Åse his old mother and Solvejg his sweetheart, who, because they love him, must wait and suffer. It is such an easy thing for a man to say that he can surely do what he likes so long as he is ready to bear the penalty. But the fact is, no man can bear more than a very small part of the influence which follows inevitably upon his acts.

One night, later on in the story, Peer Gynt, in the height of his prosperity, is discoursing over the wine. He is, as usual, complimenting himself upon his success. He attributes it all to his consistent adherence to the policy of "going round," of hedging, of not committing oneself "once for all" to anything. He has a fine outburst elsewhere against the phrase "once for all," and against the entire idea of it. Hold on, he would say, so long as it suits you; but at that

point let go. But hearken to Peer Gynt: like some of the world's most sinister figures, he has style.

“The key to the art
Of life's affairs is simply this:
To keep one's ear close shut against
The ingress of one dangerous viper.”

“What sort of viper, pray, dear friend?” asks Mr. Cotton, one of the sycophants who is listening to him. And Peer continues:

“A little one that slyly wiles you
To tempt the irretrievable.
The essence of the art of daring,
The art of bravery in fact,
Is this: To stand with choice-free foot
Amid the treacherous snares of life,—
To know for sure that other days
Remain beyond the day of battle,—
To know that ever in the rear
A bridge for your retreat stands open.
This theory has borne me on,
Has given my whole career its colour.”

Peer Gynt, in fact, is one of those who *will* be morally comfortable. They do not propose to conform to the rules for living which make for peace of conscience. But if conscience should stir, and such men are not unaware that it may, he has his resource. He will dodge its thrust. He will think of something else. He will make a large contribution to some undoubtedly good

cause, as Peer Gynt, when he became a little uneasy about his slave-carrying business, became a large exporter of Bibles by the same ships,—with the idea that God will be sensible and is sure to put one thing against another. It was like him, for instance, when, after a long absence, during which his old mother was left to see her home dismantled to pay his fines, herself sinking to death, it was like him, on entering the old home, to forestall any word of reproach by sitting on the edge of her bed, putting his big arms round her frail body, knowing (for these subtle rascals know everything) that the divinity of a mother is just this, that she is ready to take any excuse for not keeping up even a true judgment of her child if that judgment is hard. There he sat, and before she could speak he had begun his old romantic stories recalling old incidents, mixing them with new lies, bearing down all her sense of injury :

“No, now we will chat together,
But only of this and that,—
Forget what’s awry and crooked,
And all that is sharp and sore.”

“Forget all that is sharp and sore” : that is the formula for Peer Gynt.

And now for this piece of sincere imagination,

in which one who even here betrays that profound and ruthless power of analysis to which he gave free rein in his later social plays depicts the career of a man who has adopted such a formula for life.

Peer Gynt's first handicap was his father. From that father he inherited a swaggering and disorderly disposition. The father had been a hard drinker, proud, flamboyant, unusual. He came of a family of some standing, and that fact alone had seemed to justify his indolence, and to establish his right to be a law to himself. He was what Mr. Chesterton has called "a rich and reeking human personality." As was natural, his wife Åse had a hard time. Poverty crept upon the home like a frost. Poverty, says Emerson, is demoralising. It is no answer to Emerson to say that it need not be.

Åse took refuge from the brutality of her position in fairy-tales, in stories of heroes, in folklore and mystery. Peer Gynt was the child of these two, according to the spirit also.

For myself, I think that in this drama Ibsen is fairer to all the facts of heredity than he came to be in his later writings. In those later writings he lays a terrible emphasis upon the inheritance which descends from generation to generation.

But he came almost to lose sight of the spirit of protest and moral freedom which likewise is an endowment or prejudice of every human life.

In *Peer Gynt* we can see the working of the drunken, riotous father, and of the dreamy, imaginative mother: but in *Peer Gynt* we can see also the working of another personality which knows itself and which might have taken measures.

When we first meet *Peer Gynt*, he is in the middle of one of his stories which were apt to grow more and more wonderful as he proceeded with them; stories which he told with such circumstance and eloquence that he ended either believing them, or feeling and behaving as though they were true.

He is sore at the moment because in a quarrel he has had the worse of it, and with that thin-skinnedness of his he suspects that people are laughing at him. He would like to do something to sooth his vanity and to re-establish himself as what Mr. Arnold Bennett has called "a card."

Ingrid, who would appear to have been in love with him, though her parents were opposed, is to be married to a kind of simpleton. *Peer Gynt* hangs about, hating everybody. The young

girls will not dance with him. Even Solvejg, whom Peer has the insight to see as differing from all the others in sweetness and modesty, "with her eyes on the ground and her hand on her mother's skirt," even Solvejg shrinks from this wild man. He breaks through a door, finds Ingrid, the bride, and carries her off to the mountains by a path too perilous for pursuers. This is done not in love, but in sheer vanity and rebelliousness and self-assertion. An action like that, of course, brings things to a crisis: a man must repent and get better, or go on and get worse. He sends Ingrid home, and himself wanders among the mountains. Here he encounters mythical beings, trolls and the Dövre King,—representing without doubt the collapse for the time being of all the protesting voices in the man's soul. For the trolls are those beings in this world who are affected by our *thoughts*, and whose thoughts affect us just as though thoughts were completed actions.

Nevertheless the higher voice is not quite silent in Peer; though when it appeals to him, instead of acting upon it, he simply becomes sentimental over it, thus allowing it to evaporate without having touched his will.

“There go two brown eagles sailing, and southward the wild geese fly; and here in the mire knee-deep must I tramp and moil. (Leaps up.) Yea, I will with them! Yea, I will wash myself pure in the bath of the keenest wind! I will up; I will plunge myself clean in the shining baptismal font, I will out . . . o’er the mountains, I will ride all sweet in soul.”

But as a matter of fact he does nothing. He was one of those who exhaust the impulses of their soul in mere feeling or in speech; who, instead of acting, simply approve of themselves for having had such feelings, and move a vote of confidence in themselves. If there is any motion to the contrary, they declare it to be out of order.

Solvejg, the sweet maiden, who, as such things in the wonderful Providence of God do happen, sees something in this wild man which has let loose her power to love, Solvejg seeks him in the mountains, and is ready to share her life with him. He is man enough to know the value of her,—“it makes any day a holy day to look at you”;—and sensitive enough to perceive that in loyalty to such a pure woman his disintegrated life would become sound and true. But he is man enough also to know that Solvejg is not one to love

lightly, but to love once for all. And there, of course, he fails. She has entered his cottage, he remaining outside. But he does not enter. Solvejg speaks: "Are you coming?" "Round about!" he answers to himself. "What?" "You must wait. It is dark, and I've got something heavy to fetch." "Wait: I will help you: the burden we'll share." "No, stay where you are! I must bear it alone." "But don't go too far, dear!" "Be patient, my girl: be my way short or long, you must wait." And Solvejg answers, nodding to him as he goes, "Yes, I'll wait."

But he does not come back: at least, not yet.

He visits his mother, who is just dying. She is too weak to scold, and, as we saw, he soon, with his stories and his fancies, puts her off. He makes her imagine that he and she are off on a sleigh. He snaps his fingers, cracks a whip, until the old woman feels the wind on her cheeks, and sees the lights of the city towards which she is being borne. But it is the city of God: for as Peer Gynt looks hard at her he sees that she is dead. A great gulp of tenderness rises in his throat; but once again he destroys the very power of moral grief to do him good. He takes

credit to himself for such fineness of feeling. He kisses his mother, saying, "That is the driver's fee," and then goes out, leaving a poor peasant girl to bury her!

Peer Gynt emigrates, and we are led to understand that by the faithful application of his own unscrupulous principles he makes a fortune. This, in course of time, he loses. After wanderings in Morocco and in the Sahara he at length turns his face homewards. It is here that the drama rises to the level of great writing, to that level of moral insight and tenderness which will ensure it a place for ever. Peer Gynt comes back, and Ibsen makes us feel that this is what we have all to do: we have to come back. It is not easy. "Like an infinite wail is this coming in, coming home, coming back." For those who have eyes to see it is the first streak of any possible dawn for this man that he has so far overcome his love of moral comfort as to come back to scenes which must have the power to strike at his soul.

On the ship which is bearing him to Norway he encounters, when they are about a day's sailing from port, a stranger whom he had not seen previously. Of course this is simply Peer

Gynt himself. It is the poet's way of telling us that after the mid-time of our life a man is never alone; that there is always himself, the man he has been, and himself, the better man he has not been and might have been. Out at sea, and especially when, as happened to Peer Gynt's ship, a storm has broken loose and spars are going by the board, is a sure time and place for meeting that stranger who is a man's own self.

The ship is wrecked. Peer Gynt and the cook hang on to the keel of an upturned boat. But it can only bear one, and Peer Gynt takes care that he is the one. Seated there, the mysterious stranger joins him and begins to talk about things. Peer Gynt reaches land, and things begin to ferment in his soul. There was a time when he was more or less master of his own faculties, a time when he could use his subtilty to extricate him out of difficult places. But, as I said in our last study, we never know how we are going to behave. Those very faculties now turn upon Peer Gynt and employ all their subtilty to drive him out of his own corners, to expose his own sophistries to himself and to leave him no hiding-place from reality. He begins with awful clarity to see through himself. He sees that he

has never been anything. Thinking himself master of himself, he has, on the contrary, been the victim of this and that and everything. He picks up an onion and begins to peel one layer from another, always discovering still another, and that the whole thing is a thing of layers without any central personality. And he perceives that that is a picture of himself.

“What an enormous number of swathings !
Isn't the kernel soon coming to light ?
I'm blest if it is ! to the innermost centre
It's nothing but swathings each smaller and smaller.”

He tries to rally the old Peer Gynt who could sophisticate his own feelings ; but in vain. He cannot but be serious, even superstitious. He sees grey thread-balls, and they keep saying to him : “ We are the thoughts thou shouldst have brought us.” He sees withered leaves, which also charge him : “ We are a watchword : thou shouldst have proclaimed us.” The winds sigh, and they seem to say : “ We are the songs thou shouldst have sung.” “ We are tears,” say the dewdrops, “ unshed for ever.” The broken straws on which he treads speak up to him : “ We are deeds, thou shouldst have achieved us : Doubt hath throttled, hath crippled us.” And at

last he hears the wailing of his old mother's voice : " You've driven me the wrong way," it complains.

In this mood he encounters a strange symbolical figure. Ibsen calls him the Button-moulder. He carries with him a ladle in which are placed for melting the souls of people who, like Dante's neutrals (who were too bad for Hell), have in this world been nothing, have never with energy been either good or bad.

There is, says this Button-moulder, one destiny for those whose will has been good : and there is another destiny for those whose will has been bad ; but for those who have never taken up a strong stand in life, either good or bad, who have simply been for themselves at every moment, there is no destiny but to be melted down into mere material, as you melt down a defaced coin. The charge, that is to say, which Peer Gynt's awakened conscience makes against him is that he has been—nothing !

There follows a time, we are asked to imagine, when Peer Gynt is searching for something either good or bad which he can bring to the Button-moulder's judgment, claiming that there and then did he, Peer Gynt, assert his true soul, that he

may claim on the strength of that one thing a man's place and destiny. But his own ruthless and subtle mind, which formerly served him well, is now against him. He can find in all his career no individual, personal act, no act which with all its consequences he accepted and stood by. Time and again the Button-moulder crosses his path, reminding him that the hour cannot be much longer delayed.

One day in his wanderings he hears through the mist the voice of one singing. Something awakens within him. Following the direction of the sound, he reaches a hut, and coming to the doorway he sees within, Solvejg, the sweet maiden who loved him, now old and blind. Though her eyes are without vision, she knows that it is he,— he for whose coming she has waited all those years. “It is he! it is he! Now blessed be God!” she cries. But in a voice hoarse with concern he interrupts her. He asks her for the tale of his heartlessness towards her, so that he may submit even that to his judge. But she protests that he has never wronged her; that, on the contrary, her love of him has made her life the great thing it has been.

With this, his last hope seems lost, when it

comes suddenly upon him that perhaps Solvejg can tell him where his true self has been. And here let Ibsen speak :

Peer Gynt. Lost ! if you cannot guess riddles.

Solvejg. Ask them.

Peer Gynt. Ask them ? ay, verily ! Can you tell me where Peer Gynt has been since last we met ?

Solvejg. Where he has been ?

Peer Gynt. With the mark of his destiny upon his brow ; e'en as he sprang from God's thought ? Can you tell me that ? If not, I must wend me home, must sink into the land of mists.

Solvejg. Oh, that riddle is easily read.

Peer Gynt. Then say what you know. Where have I been as myself, whole and true ? Where have I been with God's stamp on my brow ?

Solvejg (smiling). In my faith, in my hope, in my love.

Peer Gynt (starting back). What say you ? Ha ! they are juggling words. To that boy in your heart¹ you yourself are the mother.

Solvejg. His mother I am. But who is his father ? 'Tis he who pardons at the mother's prayer.

Peer Gynt (as a ray of light from the rising sun falls on him). My mother, my spouse, thou innocent woman ! Oh, shield me, shield me in thy bosom ! (He grips fast hold of her and buries his face in her lap. Long silence as the sun rises.)

Solvejg (sings softly). Sleep thou, sleep, my darling boy. I will rock thee, I will watch. The boy has sat on his mother's lap. They two have played the whole livelong day. The boy has rested on his mother's breast the whole livelong

¹ " Boy in the heart " = idea.

day. God bless thee, my joy ! The boy has lain so close to my heart the whole livelong day. Now he is so tired. Sleep thou, sleep, my darling boy ! I will rock thee, I will watch.

The Button-Caster's voice (from behind the house). We meet at the last crossway, Peer ; and then we shall see—I say no more.

Solvejg (sings louder as the day strengthens). I will rock thee, I will watch. Sleep and dream, my darling.

It is true that Peer Gynt has still to meet the Button-moulder. He has still to stand up at the great Assizes. What then is his new confidence ? It is this : that in any world in which the Button-moulder has a place there will be a place likewise for Solvejg.

There are two rocks on which man must cast anchor,—or be wrecked,—woman and God. For many souls those two rocks are outcroppings of the same underlying reef.

III. "LA MORTE"

There is a sentence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's most notable story which I recall from a remote memory, with which I may begin this study. The words are somewhat to this effect : God help two people, a man and a woman, if one or the other should ever learn that there is a more beautiful

kind of love than that to which they have accustomed each other. He goes on, of course, to say that that higher way, once it has dawned upon one or the other, will make the lower way intolerable, and a tragedy, secret or open, will follow, unless those two can find some deeper foundation on which to rebuild the shattered fabric of their common life. Now I know of no idea which has expressed itself so persistently in the literature of the soul as just that idea, that there is a quality of spiritual light which, when it falls upon a human life, begins there and then to disturb, to provoke, to protest, to appeal, to arouse shame and anger, and at the same time hope and the passion to be different. When that ray of white light falls upon a soul of a certain quality,—and the great affirmation of Christianity is that every soul is at its depths of that very quality,—there begins to work at its centre a kind of revulsion which soon acquires such force as to tear a way out for itself, overturning, if need be, the habits of a lifetime, and facing as a very light and even grateful thing the retribution of society and the astonishment and forsaking of friends. Until the moment when that light dawned, the man was able to control his thoughts about him-

self. He had his times of uneasiness ; but he had learned how to deal with himself at such times. It was enough simply to cease from some practice which aggravated the uneasiness, or for a season to adopt some slight severity towards himself which seemed to have the effect of misleading, and, for the time, satisfying the inner demand of his nature. But when this white light falls upon him, when this predestined messenger knocks at his door, half-measures no longer meet his case. He must either rally all that is evil within him to insult and browbeat the messenger of God—as when Peter kept up his denial for a time by the help of oaths ; or he must throw wide open his door, and say in any language which the stress of the occasion discovers to him : “ My Lord and my God ! ”

There is no single fact about human nature to which one may quote such a unanimous testimony from all great literature as to this fact, that the soul of man lies open, with an incurable openness, to the challenge and appeal of the holier way.

The face of Beatrice let loose in Dante a moral tide which, I will not say made him drag his anchors, but compelled him to carry his anchors,

quite unconscious of their weight, into that great sea whose farther shore was Heaven.

Pagan as he was, Goethe also knew himself too well not to perceive that this was the deepest thing in man, his liability to be smitten to the centre of his being, and sent out upon his new career by the vision of something holier than had come into his philosophy. "Let me save you, Margaret," he pleaded in the dungeon where his poor victim, crazed with grief, awaited death, "let me save you." "How save me?" she asked; "by the help of that low way of life which has been our bane?" "Yes, let us flee: let us resume life on the old basis," Faust pleaded. To which Margaret answered: "Henry, I shudder at thee!" And in that shudder she placed a live coal on the altar of that not very honourable heart.

It is this very idea, and the fertility of his applications of it, which for myself I have always held to be the distinctive message of Robert Browning. Caponsacchi can go on living his double life with only slight spasms of discomfort, until one day he sees the sweet pure face of Pompilia. Whereupon the world begins to give way under him. Away along the corridors of his

life tapers begin to light up the darkness. The life he had been leading becomes in one moment impossible for ever.

Sebald could still hold down the man of God within him, could still confuse his conscience with reasons and examples from the behaviour of the world, until Pippa went by that spring morning, singing. Whereupon there was kindled in him, and through him in Ottima, a moral fire which made death more desirable than one further hour of the old dishonour.

Ned Bratts and his wife could brazen out the disgrace and punishment of this and that, until, in Bedford Jail, they met John Bunyan, who took down "the Blessed Book" and spoke to them about God, about Christ, about forgiveness; whereupon it was with them also as if something had been killed for ever, and something had been born.

In what will be the last of these studies we shall see how Bernard Shaw has made a handsome acknowledgment of this ultimate liability of the human soul, that, given the proper occasion, a beautiful, moral tenderness may be let loose in a most unlikely heart, by its contact with something gentle and uncorrupted; in the particular case,

by the feeling of a child's fingers on a wild man's neck.

In the light of the literature of the soul we recover our confidence. There will be no apostasy of the human race. There may be experiments. There will be. There will, in consequence, be many a sore head, and many a sore heart. But "*securus judicat orbis terrarum.*" We never know the day of the Son of Man, the day when here and there the human soul may come to itself, when here and there man may cry out for a new bondage in God, as with a more strident voice he has been crying for a freedom from God. For once again we have seen what we have seen, and we can never be as though we had not seen it. Each epoch of time has its own voice, its own emphasis: but there are ancestral voices to which man is for ever even terribly susceptible.

In a controversy between the wind and the tide the issue is never really for a moment in doubt. There may be much noise, but the deeper influence has its way. For a wind is local, whereas a tide is connected with the moon, and the sun, and the stars; and there are great times when moon and sun and a group of stars are

in conjunction and pull one way. In the firmament of the soul such great times are always coming.

Octave Feuillet's *La Morte* may not belong to the very greatest order of fiction: the story is too conscious of its own moral. And yet the story deals with such a universal interest, and does such justice to the conflicting standpoints, that it will bear pondering for many a long day.

The author tells us explicitly that he has brought together two well-defined types of character, so that he may observe or predict how things will turn out with them. And so far as he is quite faithful to his own imagination he has shown us in miniature how similar lives on the wide scale of a general society will also work out. The story deals with a marriage; and there at once we are at the real heart of the controversy between the different ways of looking at life. For any way of looking at life which claims general acceptance is to be judged, and soon or late will come to be judged, by its ability to carry us through those elementary human functions, one of which is enshrined in Christian marriage.

La Morte, then, consists for the most part of

letters in which Bernard, Vicomte de Vaudricourt (whom we shall simply call "Bernard") tells his own story. He describes himself as one who quite early in his manhood had come under the agnosticism of the nineteenth century. He had tenderness enough to shed tears when it seemed to him no longer possible to believe. He bids us take his word for it, and we do, that it was not merely to justify his own way of living that he abandoned his faith. He describes himself, in short, to use a phrase, as an average man about town. Of an old family, rich, and the prospective heir to a wealthy uncle, he meets, with a view to marriage, Mademoiselle Aliette de Courteheuse (whom we shall henceforth call "Aliette").

Belonging to a family of equal standing, Aliette is a sensitive and ardent Catholic. She was the devoted daughter of a father who himself had been a recluse, defending himself from the contamination of the time in the history and literature and circumstances of what seemed to him an infinitely better time,—for it was by comparison an age of faith—the seventeenth century. But let me transcribe a scene. Aliette is showing Bernard the library of the Château. He has remarked

upon its richness in materials of the seventeenth century.

"Your father must have had a great predilection for the century of Louis XIV?" I said.

"My father lived in it," she replied gravely.

And as I looked at her with a somewhat uneasy surprise, she added—

"And he made me live in it with him."

The eyes of this strange girl filled with tears as she spoke.

She turned away and took a few steps to repress her emotion ; then, coming back, she pointed to a chair, sat down herself on the library footstool, and said—

"I must describe my father to you."

She paused a moment, as if lost in thought ; then, speaking with unaccustomed freedom, hesitating, and blushing visibly whenever she was about to pronounce a word which might appear a little too serious from such young lips, she continued :

"My father died from the effects of a wound which he received at Patay. To tell you this, is to say that he loved his country but he did not love the time in which he lived. He had a great love of order, and he saw none anywhere. He had a perfect horror of disorder, and this he saw on all sides ; more especially towards the end of his life, everything which occurred, all that was said and all that was written, was sorely opposed to his opinions, to all that he respected, and to all his tastes. Deeply grieved by the events of the present, he took refuge in the past ; the seventeenth century corresponded more particularly to the kind of society in which he would have preferred to live ; a society well-ordered, polite, believing and lettered. As time went on, he liked, more and more, to shut himself up with that period. He liked, more and more, to see the moral discipline and the literary tastes of his favourite century take precedence in his house. You may possibly have remarked that he encouraged this fancy even in the picture-

frames and decorations. From this window you can see the long straight alleys, the boxwood edgings, the clipped yew-trees, and the wych elms of our garden. You can see that we have in our flower-border none but the flowers of that time—lilies, peonies, hollyhocks, marigolds, pinks—in short, those which are called parson's flowers. Our old sylvan tapestries are also of the period. You see, too, that all our furniture, from the wardrobes and the sideboards to the consoles and the easy-chairs, is in the most severe style of the time of Louis XIV. My father had no taste whatever for the refined affectations of modern luxury. He believed that excessive comfort enervated the mind as well as the body. That is the reason," added the young girl laughingly, "that you have such uncomfortable chairs in our house. Yes, naturally. You are going to speak of compensations—Very good!"

Then resuming her grave tone—

"In this way, my father tried to carry out the illusion of living in the epoch upon which his thoughts were always running. Need I say that I was my dearly loved father's confidant—the sympathising confidant of his troubles, the indignant confidant of his annoyances, the happy confidant of his joys! It was in this very room—amidst these books which we read together, and which he taught me to love—it was here that I passed the happiest hours of my youth. Together we sang the praises of those days of faith and tranquillity, of those safe and happy moments when the pure and beautiful French language, refined taste, and high-bred politeness were the mark and fame of our country, and which have since then ceased to be so."

She paused, slightly confused by the warmth with which she had uttered the last words.

I said, merely for the sake of saying something—

"You fully account for the impression often made upon me by your home, and which, at times, took the form of an hallucination—an agreeable one, I confess. The internal

appearance, the style, and the whole keeping of the house carried me back so completely for two hundred years, that I should not have been much surprised to have heard Monsieur le Prince, Madame de la Fayette, or even Madame de Sévigné herself announced at your drawing-room door."

"Would to Heaven it could be so!" said Mademoiselle de Courteheuse. "How I love all those good people! What delightful company they would be! What pleasure they took in elevated ideas! How immensely superior they were to the fashionable people of the present day!"

I was anxious to try and calm down her enthusiastic retrospect, so little flattering to my contemporaries and to myself, so I remarked—

"The time you regret certainly had exceptional merits, which I appreciate as fully as you do; but still, we must admit that underneath this society which was so well balanced, so well ordered, and apparently so select, there existed the very same sorrows and disorders as in our own. I see here many memoirs of that time, but, of course, I do not know which of them you have read—or not read—and consequently I feel slightly embarrassed."

She interrupted me—

"Oh," she said simply, "I know what you mean quite well. I have not read everything here; but I have read enough to know that my ancient friends had their passions, their weaknesses, their errors, just like the people of to-day. But, as my father used to say, all these were founded upon a serious and solid basis, which always righted itself. Great faults were committed, but there was also genuine repentance. There existed an upper sphere, where everything came right in the end—even wickedness."

On its becoming known to Aliette's family that Bernard did not share their form of faith, and

was not even a Christian, all thought of marriage between them is opposed. Bernard, on his side, most scrupulous as he is not to encourage the illusion that even such a marriage as this, which he greatly desires, will alter his mind on matters of belief, is nevertheless ready to pledge his honour that he will leave his wife entire liberty there, and will never by word, or action, or innuendo, seek to injure or deflect her mind. On this basis the marriage is agreed upon and takes place. But not until an uncle of Aliette's, a high dignitary of the Church, has given his consent. This in his case rested upon the hope, which he communicated to Aliette herself, that there was no saying what influence such a wife might have.

Thus those two set out into life; and we are asked again to confess by the witness of another illustration that two cannot go far together unless they be agreed.

They make their home in Paris, and there very soon comes the rift within the lute. Aliette tries bravely to live her own life, defending and nourishing her soul, and at the same time to go out with Bernard, meeting the world on its own ground. Bernard sees clearly what it is all costing

his wife, and in course of time becomes impatient. Now and then he allows some reckless word to escape, for which he never fails indeed to rebuke himself. Aliette likewise, even more scrupulous than he, in terror of losing her husband's love, or of failing in her duty as a wife, makes heroic attempts to compromise with the higher insistences of her nature, and steels her spirit to mingle freely in her husband's world, which was just the world.

But it seemed to her like being on board a sinking ship where the officers instead of doing their duty were making themselves drunk with the crew.

One day, their conversation having fallen upon the moral condition of the poorer classes, with whom Aliette's charitable disposition brought her into frequent contact, the young wife ventured to say that, unfortunately, lessons in materialism were given to the people only too often by the higher classes of society.

"You are quite right," said Bernard, "and I really do not know where we are all going to at this rate, nor what terrible things will happen next; but, as we can do nothing, the best way is not to think about it."

"Like Louis XV?" replied Aliette. "But are you quite sure that nothing can be done? Do you not think that the abolition of all religious belief, of all hope beyond this life, of all recourse to God, has a great deal to do with this furious and all-absorbing eagerness for present enjoyment, at which you yourself are alarmed?"

"On the contrary, I am convinced of it," said Bernard. "But what then? What are you driving at? Is it my fault

if the earth turns round? Is it my fault if unbelief reigns high and low, and invades all classes? Do you mean to insinuate that I ought to set an example to the people? An example of *what* I should like to know, since I believe in nothing? The example of hypocrisy and sacrilege?"

Aliette turned very pale and made no answer.

"My dear," he went on in a hard tone, "you are contending for the impossible. You are a Christian in reality in the midst of a society which is so only in name. You cannot reform the century in which you live. You cannot turn Paris of the nineteenth century into a Port Royal, of which you would be the Mother Angelique. Do for goodness' sake give up the idea! And especially I beg of you give up the idea of bringing me back, me personally, to your way of thinking. You are possessed with the mania of converting me, and, to speak frankly, it annoys me a little, for I am conscious of it under your slightest words and actions. . . . Give up this idea once and for all: do not think about it any more, and you will see what a relief it will be to our two unhappy lives."

Aliette could only look at him with the tearful, beseeching eyes of some dumb creature at the last extremity. His natural good temper returned to him, and sitting down beside her, he said in a gentler tone—

"I am wrong, dear. As to conversion, one must never despair of anything or anybody. Do you remember Monsieur de Rance, for instance, who is of our own day? Well, before becoming the reformer of the Trappists, he had been like myself, a worldling and a great sceptic, what was then called a libertine. For all that, he became a saint! It is true that there was a terrible reason. You know what brought about his conversion?"

Aliette made a sign that she did not know.

"Well, he came back to Paris after an absence of some days and found her whom he loved dead . . . her head severed."

"If I were sure," said Aliette, "that my head would have the same power, I should be glad to die."

One only needs insight to foresee how things will end. Aliette's health gives way under the strain of this discordant life. On a certain night which brought incidents to which Bernard confessed he had no right to expose his wife, Aliette swooned away. It was long before she recovered, and when at length she did regain consciousness, it was to beseech her husband with tears to allow her to live her own life.

They returned to the country. The days that followed were the happiest she had ever known. The quiet and regularity of her life, the care of Jeanne, her little girl, occupied and soothed her. Bernard too for a time seemed to be satisfied. But soon the weather of his soul changed, and events followed close upon one another towards the catastrophe. Their little daughter fell suddenly ill of a diphtheria which threatened to carry her off. An operation became immediately necessary. It was too late to bring a surgeon from the city. Bernard hastened to a neighbouring house where a stranger, a celebrated doctor, with his niece or cousin, was staying temporarily. This man, Dr. Vallehaut, and his

niece, Sabine, returned with Bernard, and the child's life was saved.

Dr. Vallehaut is a man of science who, like Bernard, has lost all faith in revealed religion; but the absence of faith has not yet robbed his life of ideals. The quest of pure truth, the hope of devoting the results of his research to the good of man, serve in the case of one of his temperament to keep him free from cynicism and any low way of conceiving life. It is left, as we shall see in a moment, to his cousin Sabine to carry out the principles of religious negation to their logical issue in life and action.

Dr. Vallehaut has still effectively within himself the moral reminiscences of religion. Sabine, who belongs to the next generation, has no such reminiscences: she is the author's warning of what we are to expect in the *second* generation of a materialistic and irreligious community.

But to resume.—A friendship as deep as was possible among such discordant people grew up between Aliette and her husband on the one hand, and the Doctor and Sabine. Bernard in particular sees a good deal of the Doctor's cousin, and both of them hover on the edge of folly.

In consequence doubtless of the strain, Aliette's

health gives way. At first there is no ground for alarm ; the Doctor reassures them and leaves his cousin, who, by the way, is betrothed to him, to act as nurse, her duty being to give the patient a potion at intervals. Aliette, however, does not recover. One day Bernard, taking the potion from Sabine's hand, gives it to his wife, who, as she takes it, looks into his eyes with a searching gaze which almost freezes his blood. She drinks the potion, and next day dies. It had contained aconite, a slow and untraceable poison which had been placed there by Sabine.

According to his daily custom, Monsieur Vallehaut conducted his ward to the door of her room, kissed her forehead, shook her by the hand, and withdrew to his own apartment.

About an hour and a half afterwards, when he thought Sabine would be asleep, Dr. Vallehaut, who had not gone to bed himself, left his room with great caution, went down the long passage and descended the stairs. The candlestick, which he held in his hand, illumined the pallor and contraction of the face. He entered the large room, on the ground-floor, which served him as a drawing-room and library, and from there, raising a heavy tapestry curtain, he passed into the laboratory. He went straight to a kind of sideboard of old oak, which filled up one of the angles of the wall, and in which the dangerous substances which he used in making up his medicines and in his experiments were locked up. This sideboard was fastened by one of those locks which have no key, and of which it is necessary to know the secret combination. After he had turned the revolving plate of the lock, Dr.

Vallehaut seemed to hesitate for some seconds before opening the panel of the cabinet;—then, with a violent gesture, he opened the panel. His pale forehead immediately became of a livid tint; in one of the rows of bottles which were ranged on the highest shelf his first glance revealed an empty space. At the same moment there escaped from his agitated and convulsed lips a word uttered feebly as a breath—

“Aconite!”

All at once it seemed to him that he heard a slight noise in the interior of the house. He extinguished his candle, and listened attentively. A few minutes afterwards, he distinctly heard the gliding of a furtive step, and the rustling of a silk dress in the next room. He went quickly to the door and waited. The night was beautifully fine, and was illuminated by a crescent moon, which threw its white rays across the windows and into the laboratory. The curtain of the door was raised and Sabine appeared; at the same instant the hand of Dr. Vallehaut was laid heavily upon the arm of his ward.

The young girl uttered a stifled cry, and in her first alarm dropped a small bottle which fell with a ring on the stone floor. She drew back, and ran into the next room. Near the large centre table she stopped abruptly, and leaning heavily upon it with one hand, she faced her approaching guardian.

In the library, as in the laboratory, the windows opening into the garden had no shutters, and the polar clearness of the sky spread a half-light in patches across the room. Monsieur Vallehaut could perceive an air of wild bravado on Sabine’s face and in her eyes.

“Unhappy girl,” he said to her in a hollow voice, “defend yourself. Say that you have made some mistake; aconite is also a medicine; you have seen me employ it, myself, sometimes. You have perhaps been imprudent, careless, and you were afraid that I should blame you. That is why you were hiding yourself. Come, speak!”

“What is the use?” she answered, with a disdainful wave of

the hand ; "you would not believe me ; you do not believe your own words."

The unhappy man sank down into the easy-chair in which he was accustomed to write, talking aloud to himself in his deep trouble.

"No," he murmured, "it is true. It would be impossible ; she could not have made so great a mistake ! Alas ! she knew only too well what she was doing. With what infernal skill she chose the poison, the effects of which should imitate the symptoms of the disease itself, be mistaken for them, and aggravate them, very gently, till death resulted ! Yes, it is a crime ; an odious, premeditated crime against that gentle, lovable creature !"

And after a silence—

"Oh what a miserable dupe I have been !"

Then, raising his head towards Sabine—

"Tell me at least that her husband is your accomplice ; that it is he who has induced you to commit this infamous deed !"

"No," said Sabine, "he knew nothing of it. I love him, and I know that I am loved by him. Nothing more."

Dr. Vallehaut, after minutes of speechless dejection, resumed firmly, but in a distinctly altered voice—

"Sabine, if you have counted on a criminal weakness on my part, you have not known me ; my duty, from this moment, is to hand you over to justice ; and however horrible such a duty may be, I shall perform it."

"You will think twice, uncle, before doing so," the girl said coldly, standing on the other side of the table, and facing her guardian, "for if you give me up to justice, if you give society the pleasure of witnessing such a trial in court, you must foresee what the world will say : it will say that I am your pupil, and it will say nothing but the truth !"

"My pupil, wretched girl ? Have I ever taught you other principles than those which I practise myself ? Have I ever

given you, by precept or example, other lessons than those of uprightness, justice, humanity and honour?"

"You surprise me, uncle. How is it that such a mind as yours has never foreseen that I might extract, from your doctrines and from our common studies, conclusions and teachings different from those which you drew from them yourself? The tree of science, uncle, does not produce the same fruit upon every soil. You speak to me of uprightness, of justice, of humanity, of honour? You are astonished that the same theories which have inspired you with these virtues have not inspired me with the same? The explanation is, however, quite simple; you know, as well as I do, that these sham virtues are, in reality, free to be acquired, or not; since they are only instincts, veritable prejudices imposed upon us by nature, because she requires them for the preservation and the carrying on of her work. It pleases you to submit yourself to these instincts, and it does not please me to do so, that is all."

"But have I not told you, and repeated to you a thousand times, you wretched creature, that duty, honour, even happiness consisted in submission to these natural, these divine laws?"

"You have told me so: you believe it; I believe the contrary. I believe that the duty, the honour of a human being is to rebel against such servitude, to shake off these fetters with which nature, or God, as you like, leads us and oppresses us, in order to make us work, in spite of ourselves, towards an unknown end; towards a work in which we have no interest. Ah yes! you have indeed told me, and repeated to me, that for you it was not only a duty, but a joy, to humbly contribute, by your works and your virtues, towards I know not what divine work, I know not what superior and mysterious point, towards which the universe is progressing. But, really, those are pleasures to which I am perfectly insensible. I care very little, I swear to you, to deny myself,

to force myself to suffer all my life, in order to prepare a state of happiness and perfection for I know not what future humanity—a state which I shall not enjoy, festivals to which I shall not go, and a paradise into which I shall have no entrance.”

Under the influence of the emotions which agitated her in this awful moment, her speech, at first calm and icy, became, little by little, more animated, and gradually assumed a character of violent exultation. She had quitted her first attitude, and commenced to walk, with slow steps, from one end of the library to the other, stopping at intervals to accentuate her remarks by an energetic gesture. Monsieur Vallehaut, still motionless in his easy-chair, answered her only by vague exclamations of indignation, and his eye appeared to follow, with an air of stupefaction, this spectral shadow now disappearing in the darkness, now plainly visible in the pale light which came from outside.

“Must I tell you everything?” she continued. “I was mortally tired: tired of the present, of the past, of the future. The idea of passing my life here, poring over your books or over your furnaces, with the perspective of the final perfection of the universe for my whole satisfaction and for all my comfort, this idea was insupportable to me. Such a life may suffice for a being who is all brain, like you; but for those who have nerves under the skin, blood in the veins, and passions in the heart, never. I am a woman, and I have all the aspirations, all the passions of a woman; these are even more powerful in me than they are in others, because I have neither the superstitions nor the prejudices which, with others, may deaden them. I dreamt of great love, I dreamt of a luxurious life, of amusements, of elegance, in the midst of the pleasures of society. I felt that fate had bestowed on me all the gifts which would enable me to enjoy these things in their fulness, and I was called upon to renounce them for ever. To what end would this in-

dependence of spirit which I had acquired have served me then? Of what use was all my science, if I did not extract from it some opportunity for my ambitions, some weapon for my passions? An occasion presented itself. I loved this man, and I felt that he loved me. I felt that, were he free, he would marry me. And then—I did what I have done! A crime? Nothing but a word! What is good, and what is evil? What is true, or what is false? In reality, you know very well that the code of human morality has to-day become nothing but a blank page, on which each one writes what he likes, according to his intellect and his temperament. Individual catechisms are the only ones left to us. Mine is the very same which nature teaches me by her example; she eliminates everything which annoys her with impassible egotism; she suppresses everything that opposes itself to her aims; she crushes out the weak to make room for the strong. And be assured, it is not now for the first time that this doctrine obtains with really free and superior minds. It has been said since all time, ‘Good people are taken away.’ No! it is the weak ones who disappear, and they only do what is their duty; and when one assists them a little, one only does after all the same thing as God. Read your Darwin over again, my uncle.”

On reading such a passage as that one feels that, far from it being strange and irrational that people should ever have gone to war about religion, the one thing which men might at any time quite justifiably go to war about is just religion and the moral implications of religion. After reading such a passage,—and the inferences seem to me to be quite logical, and granted the

premisses, quite inevitable, — one feels that thoroughgoing unbelievers may yet have to be exterminated for poisoning the wells and threatening to bring human life to a standstill.

After a suitable lapse of time, Bernard marries Sabine; and once again we have the materials for a tragedy which will balance the earlier one. This later tragedy we shall not pursue.

A short time only is needed for these two to cease even pretending to respect one another; and on Sabine's individualistic theories of life, the moment a relationship ceases to bind, it ceases to be binding. They separate. Bernard's heart turns to his little daughter whom he has left with Aliette's mother in the old Château. The child is in the care of an old nurse, Victoire, who had been Aliette's nurse. On Bernard's proposing to take away his child, Victoire vigorously objects, saying that if he persists in taking the child, she, Victoire, will then believe what she has not yet allowed herself to believe, that he, Bernard, was an accomplice with Sabine in the poisoning of Aliette.

The Pope in *The Ring and the Book* describes how once upon a time he stood in Naples. It was a night of the blackest darkness;

no town, no sea, no sky! Suddenly there was a lightning flash, by which for one moment he saw everything. Just so did those words of the old nurse light up the mystery of poor Aliette's last days. He remembered her last look, and in that moment something began to break, to melt, to yield within him.

"She died, believing me guilty! It is a frightful idea! I cannot bring myself to think of it; so fragile, so tender, so gentle a being. Yes, she said to herself, 'My husband is a murderer. What he is giving me to take is poison, and he knows it to be so.' And she died with this thought, her last thought: and never, never will she know that it is not true. O, Lord God Almighty, if You exist, You see what I suffer: have pity on me. Ah, that I could believe that all is not finished between her and myself; that she sees me; that she hears me; that she knows the truth."

Thus the dead Aliette began her reign. For, as I have said more than once in these studies, we do not know ourselves, and do not know how we shall behave in the great waters.

The race is older than the individual. It may need some great thing to break up that hard

crust with which our conventional life overlays and conceals the qualities of our essential and abiding human nature. But life is full of experiences, any one of which may become such a ploughshare in the hand of God.

Bernard, exhausted by grief, fell a prey to disease. Something sinister made its appearance in his throat. Feeling his end draw near, he sent for Aliette's uncle, the Bishop. He wished to die in Aliette's religion. And so she had her way ; or, God had His way through her.

Here, once again, we have been considering a case which in its essentials need not be at all unusual or curious. It is another illustration, on the testimony and authority of a true imagination, that the human soul moves in an orbit round a central sun, so that at the limit of its apogee it is already coming back.

Of this also we have had another illustration, namely, that a life of moral disorder is already discovering and creating its own tragedy, out of which it will at length cry out.

And of this, finally, we have had an illustration, and it prepares us for the studies which shall follow,—that for everyone who in this world has wronged another there is but one way back to

self-respect, to peace, to God, and it by kneeling in perfect humility before the face, alive or dead, of that one whom he has wronged.

And there again we enter that Valley of the Spirit, at the head of which and against a wonderful sky, stands for ever the Cross of Calvary.

IV. THE REDEMPTION OF OUR SOLITUDE

(Dostoievsky, Tolstoy, Bernard Shaw)

I think we have now abandoned for ever that way of dealing with august and accepted facts of human nature, or of society, which was the first-fruits of the scientific spirit, and remained in vogue until a saner and severer scientific method found it wanting.

The formula was, to trace some highly developed state of mind or social institution to its primitive and rudimentary form. Then, with an appearance of logic and candid thinking, to leave us to conclude, in the first place, that anything which is so natural must somehow not be authoritative for man; and, in the second place, that anything which had such a mean beginning, and which at the outset sustained itself by the help of

ideas and of a view of life which are no longer possible, cannot be expected to have our moral and intellectual assent in these days when we all know so much.

The method was always the same. Indeed, I believe its dullness and monotony contributed to its overthrow. It ceased to be interesting. The intention was so obvious, and the process in each case so precisely the same as in every other. It all worked with such neatness and reasonableness, that men's minds began to be quite sure that it was not the whole truth. Man was alleged to have affinities with the lower creatures. It took some time for us to see that this account of man left out any explanation of the very things in man which, as we say, make a man of him. For the decisive thing about man, the characteristic thing, lies, of course, not in those features which he shares in common with lower creatures; but in those features, those prejudices, and a certain resiliency of spirit, which are entirely his own, and amongst these the indomitable prepossession that he is not a lower creature. When you propose to a company of men to-day that they should regard themselves as mere animals, on the ground that once upon a time they were little if anything

better, that company of men may shudder at your words, or they may laugh at you, or, if they happen at the moment to be in one of those fierce moods which descend upon us from time to time, they may even put you to death. And you are bound to explain that shudder, that laughter, and that fierceness in which man separates himself from all other creatures, and reveals something essential and central to his own nature.

By the same reasoning it was discovered that "morals" was but another word for "manners." The Latin word was given, and we were left with the insinuation that our private and social moralities were simply the strictures which men had placed upon themselves in bygone times in order to dwell together in unity and to hold their own. In any case, these private and social moralities were to be considered as the tenements and dwelling-places of the spirit of fear, of physical fear, or of religious fear,—and this, of course, had vanished in the general enlightenment.

We need not, however, further illustrate the method of reasoning, though it was applied in every field, and assailed all the securities for essential human life in our laws and in the Christian faith. The method has been frankly

abandoned, and in this very sense that it is now employed to support an entirely opposite conclusion. The fact that man has arisen from lowly conditions, and has improved his status, is now made the basis, not for a contempt of ideals : it has become, on the contrary, the ground of a new rhetoric concerning human nature which may run to its own excess. When we say nowadays that man arose from lowly conditions, we put the emphasis upon the fact that he arose. For if he arose, it was by virtue of something within him which was never satisfied with its achievement at any particular stage, something which made him weary of every resting-place ; and, if he lingered on, that weariness deepened into shame. And so, in our day, man is being conceived as a being who bears within himself a spirit, an impulse, still fresh and unexhausted, which, simply because it has led him on so far, must continue to lead him on.

Concerning the true nature of that mysterious urgency, we know—apart from the illumination of faith—nothing for certain except this, that it compels man onwards, in the line and direction of his earlier progress, never to the denial or frustrating of any moral dignity to which he had attained, but always to some further and finer

application of itself. Man's progress, in short, is seen to lie along the line of a fuller expression, of a more sensitive apprehension of a principle of his nature, concerning which no fair-minded observer can be in doubt as to its tendency in past times, and as to the destiny it is seeking to accomplish in the midst of all our failures and protests and secret strife.

It is true that society might again be convulsed by war, and war of such violence and duration that the more delicate achievements of man's moral sense might be entirely lost. Or there might occur in our day, or in a later time, something which invaded and overwhelmed our heaped-up civilisation, as the Goths and Vandals swept over Europe.

In such a day, in a sheer struggle for life, the finer things of the soul would shrink back and hide behind the coarse and more necessary faculties. Round the platter of life the tiger in man would whet his teeth anew. The airy fret-work of the spirit, the more exquisite and subtle perceptions and demands, would all go down in that dark day.¹

¹ These two paragraphs were written when the sky in Europe was still as clear as it had been for ten years.

But, unless that day returns, the moral sense in man will become more and more individual and delicate and subtle. His sins, the failures with which he charges himself, will also become more individual and delicate and subtle. He will arrive at a day in the evolution and refinement of his nature,—a day which has in every age dawned upon elect and rarer souls,—when he will live by the guidance of secret and spiritual signs, in an intenser solitude, liable to the thrustings and hauntings of most delicate fears, and to the encouragement and appeal of equally intangible approvals: the condition indeed predicted in a verse of a psalm which promises that a day is coming when God will guide people with His eye, by the lights and the shadows, *i.e.*, on His answering countenance.

And serious men to-day no longer attempt to disparage these delicate and poignant distresses of the soul by recalling the rude restraints and penalties of primitive societies. They rather perceive that this necessity, which from the beginning was acknowledged, this willingness to accept restraint and punishment, bears witness to something in man which is his true and differentiating sign.

And now, passing by many matters which, strictly speaking, intervene, I propose to bring before our minds one or two further illustrations and corroborations from the more serious literature of our time of the thesis underlying these studies. That thesis I might state in some such words as these : There is a way by which we must go, and that way is, on the whole, the way by which we have come.

For the modern period, Goethe's *Faust* is perhaps the classical illustration of a man setting out to test the findings of human wisdom in the region of morals. In *Faust* you have already those principles of revolt and experiment which reappear in much of our contemporary literature. In *Faust*, in addition, you have the forecast of what, according to Goethe, who weighed the matter for a whole lifetime, is sure to be the outcome, for the individual and for society, of the application of those principles.

"Let me have him," said Mephistopheles, "and I pledge me he will eat the dust, and that with joy." Well, eat the dust he did. He marched through blood and rapine to the satisfaction of every appetite. But never with joy, never with a moment of solid peace. "The tiger

sleeps when he has devoured his prey, but a man sleeps not after he has sinned." If you retort that, on the contrary, he does sleep, we must answer with all great literature that, in that case, he is not truly a man.

But it is over a hundred years since *Faust* was written; and it may very well be that every age must write its own *Faust*, as every man has, in fact or in imagination, to enact his own *Faust*.

There are three works of the imagination written in our own very language of feeling, and in the light of all that we know who belong to this age. I shall briefly consider them from the point of view of these studies.

I am thinking of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, and Bernard Shaw's *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*.

When men go deeply enough into the human soul, they find the same things: and when they go still more deeply, they find the same thing. That final thing I would call an awful loneliness and sense of God. But not to anticipate. Those three works are three determined experiments in living, determined adventures into the region of ultimate things, and in each case, I hold, the

voyaging soul comes upon a limit and barrier in the very nature of things, which limit and barrier is—God. Now, in saying that this limit and barrier is God I am not saying something which would be only equal to saying that "X" is "X." I mean something more vital and constructive. I mean that in each of those studies of the soul a man in his passionate progress in one direction encounters a limit and barrier which simply blocks his way. But it is not a wooden barrier, or a stone wall: nor is it merely a precipice beyond which stretches chaos and old night. He is met by a living barrier, by something which has the qualities of a Person, something which has the effect of dealing with him in his despair and bankruptcy, something which can not only stop him but can turn him back. And not only turn him back, as one might come back sullenly and heavily, but turn him back, as in the case of Raskolnikov and Nekhludov, with a strong and sober gratitude to God for the moral inexorable-ness of things: and as in the case of Blanco Posnet, with a shining countenance.

In Dostoievsky's novel, moral nihilism forms the central theme. The hero of the story is a student whom all kinds of unhappy conditions

have made miserable and tired of life. In this frame of mind he takes up an attitude of revolt, not merely against the external order, such as social conventions, rights of government, and the rest, but against the entire conception of personal responsibility. All the moral judgments and feelings which education has implanted in him now seem to be ridiculous childish prejudices, contemptible weakness, to emancipate himself from which is the mark of a free and strong mind. Encouraged by such reflections, he kills an old repulsive usurer in order to obtain money, but, at the same time also, to test his own theory, to test this idea which for a long time he had been handling and accustoming himself to, wearing down his own scruples, and working himself up to greater and greater boldness—the idea that one only needed to be strong enough and hard enough to go his own way and to prosper. “I wanted to know,” he afterwards says in discussing the matter, “whether I was like all of them, merely vermin, or a man; whether I was able to break through the barriers, or not,—whether I would really stoop to gain power, or not; whether I was merely a trembling creature, or whether I had a right . . .” and so on. He commits the crime.

No one saw him strike the blow. Besides, she was an old woman, one of a despised race too, and plying a disreputable trade. And these were circumstances which, from the moment after his deed, he had at once to summon to his aid, to keep back the first tricklings of the dark flood of reaction and remorse.

But he never has an hour's quiet. He must talk. He must talk even to a friend, who as a detective is engaged upon the case. He must set out again and again to see that detective friend, to talk about the case. The police fail. Raskolnikov might have escaped—except for himself and the inveterate demand of his own spirit that he shall not be alone, that he shall talk, and, talking, shall speak about the things that are most urgent to himself. Speaking about these things, he cannot hide his feelings, until at last, noticing how it gives him a little happiness even to speak about the case, and a little more happiness the more he seems to implicate himself, he one day goes the whole length, and first betrays himself, then confesses everything,—and this to an accompaniment of moral happiness and ease so tumultuous and wonderful that he feels that he had never lived until that moment. When he

confesses his guilt to his friend the detective, the detective only replies, "I knew it all the time. The first day you came to see me, after the crime, I suspected you. When you began to speak of it, I became quite sure. I didn't lay hands upon you, for I knew that you were one of those who would have to come at last!"

"When I kept silent," says someone in the 32nd Psalm, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity I did not hide. . . . I said, Thou art my hiding-place." So speaks a man to the mysterious One who haunts him in the deep places of moral solitude.

There is another voice from a psalm which I recall: "These things thou hast done and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

And all great literature seems to have as its burden just this, that such beings we are, and in the hand of such an One.

In the last of his greater works Tolstoy has advanced, for those who did not acknowledge the teaching of the New Testament, the moral demand which the human soul must henceforth make of all who would live honourably and at peace with themselves. I do not say that he was the first to proclaim our duty to make reparation to everyone whom we have wronged. Tolstoy was not the first to say that. It was the greatness of Tolstoy that he was not the first to say anything. Anything that is said for the first time might as well not have been said. It is quite certainly either not true or of no real importance. But it is Tolstoy's greatness, in that late work of his, to have recalled, with a fidelity to the facts of our conscience which is almost intolerably true, the instinct of the soul of man, aroused at length, and indignant at itself, and full of revenge upon itself,—the instinct of man to regard himself as no longer belonging to himself, but to that one, if there be such an one, whom he has pre-eminently wronged.

There is no doubt whatever that if confession ceases to be in some sense public, it is apt to lose its cleansing quality. If we say "it is enough that we confess to God in secret," the answer is,

that it is not enough, and was never regarded as enough by finer souls. Besides, it is a bad sign when we take our religion on its lowest terms. It is a bad sign when we wish to get clear of an offence with the least measure of sacrifice. We may, indeed, get off, but we simply get off. We are fixed there. We stand still.

Again, when we say, defending ourselves, that we are taking the easier way, we must remember that in morals the easier way is never the higher way. Besides, if we will but attend to the voice of our own soul in the hour when we confess ourselves to God, when we smooth out our secret life to the judgment of the Highest, we shall find that our conscience is not yet appeased. We shall hear an instruction from Him who is behind everything, commanding us, were it only to prove our sincerity, to go out and find him or her whom we have wronged.

“If thou art offering thy gift at the altar,” said Jesus, “and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

It is when we recall the severity of such words

—and, far from standing alone, they arise out of the whole message of the New Testament—that we wonder again how an entire ethical system should have arisen in our day based upon the idea that the ethics of Jesus are too soft and easy. This, though Jesus said more than once that there were circumstances in which a man might find himself when it would be as hard to follow Him as it would be for one to cut off his right hand with his left.

Prince Nekhludov was summoned to act upon a jury. It was his turn. That is to say, it was one of those apparently casual things which, as we get older, we begin to suspect as having God very emphatically behind them. A prisoner was brought in, charged with murder, and this in circumstances of the utmost degradation. In a moment, as the Bible once again puts it (and if you know the Bible, you simply cannot keep it out of any deep consideration of life), in a moment “a dart struck through his liver.” It is Maslova, an orphan, at one time a sweet, warm-hearted girl, who had acted as a kind of companion to Nekhludov’s aunts. And it was he, Nekhludov, who had led Maslova out upon her disastrous way and had set her face towards hell.

Maslova is condemned, though innocent of the crime, and is banished to Siberia. And Nekhludov accompanies her. A prince, a great landlord, a soldier, sought after by society, and Maslova, one whom he might have dismissed from his mind,—if what so many in our day say about the human soul were the whole truth! Nekhludov does not hesitate even for a moment. Maslova has never reproached him. Even when it comes home to her that he is unhappy, and when she understands, first dimly, but at last quite clearly, that in his own feeling and belief Nekhludov can never be at peace until she, Maslova, has forgiven him, and even then that he can never be at peace, she tries to put him off his own terrible seriousness, even saying that for herself it is nothing, and that as for him, he is a prince, and besides, she had loved him in that far-off time. But Nekhludov has seen his way, and for him there is no other. Henceforward, and until God shall release the one or the other from this present world, and even thereafter in the other world, as in Dante's heart-shaking story of Paolo and Francesca, these two must share each other's thoughts, each other's life, and every day and at the last must stand before God hand in hand.

This is what I meant when I said that it had been given to Tolstoy to recall man to that demand which conscience makes upon us, not simply that we shall confess our sin, thereby separating ourselves from it, but that we shall make all possible reparation. If there live in the world one whom we have wronged, that one alone has the power to shut us out from heaven. Or rather, let me say, if God should forgive us our sin, it will be our first, and, until it is granted, our only petition, that we be given some task of prostrate love towards that one whom we, either in ignorance or with a high hand, caused to offend.

Speaking for myself, the terrible moral reality of Tolstoy makes even the *Confessions* of St. Augustine sound far short of what is possible to the soul of man in the region of moral grief.

And now I come to a play of Bernard Shaw's, in which we find the soul of a man behaving in precisely the same way as in those two overwhelming stories.

The scene of the short drama is laid in the far west of America,—in the midst of a wild and coarse-living community.

Blanco Posnet has stolen a horse, and is now standing his trial in a rough-and-ready court, the sheriff and jury being men as wild and unscrupulous as himself. Though Posnet has been caught, and there is no doubt whatever of his guilt, still it is difficult to bring the crime home to him: for when he was apprehended he was walking on foot, the horse nowhere to be seen. A witness is pressed to give false evidence against him. She has no difficulty. Blanco Posnet behaves all through with an excitement and intoxication which we do not quite understand until later. He breaks out into snatches of a hymn, which he allows them to suppose is pure blasphemy,—as the censor who interdicted the play evidently considered it to be. And yet it is not pure blasphemy. In a moment of something like tenderness Posnet speaks about a woman and a child, but so indistinctly that his hearers can make nothing of it. He keeps saying: "They were not real," and "I see her whenever I look up." The sheriff and jury are getting tired, and about to execute judgment, when there is a stir at the door, which presently opens. A woman enters, pale and hurried; whereupon Posnet appeals to the court not to

listen to a word she says; that she is not real, and that it is she whom he sees whenever he looks up.

But the woman speaks, and we learn the whole truth, the beautiful and even holy truth. This is what had happened. Blanco Posnet, riding off on the stolen horse, had been stopped on the way by a woman, this woman, who at the time was carrying a little child. She besought Posnet to lend her his horse that she might ride to the nearest doctor with her child. For the child was in the grip of a kind of croup. At first Posnet spurns her. Why should he, why should any man, especially in this twentieth century, when so many books have been written to prove that such a thing is absurd, weak, unworthy of the Nietzschean "blonde beast" which is supposed to exhaust the qualities of human nature, why should he be interrupted, brought to a standstill, be made tender, be converted, in fact, by this plea of a woman? And so he tries to push on. But the woman, with the ingenuity of love and of despair, lifts up the child to the man's neck, and Blanco Posnet feels the little fingers playing behind his ears, and in his hair. And with that, something melted, something went

soft. He let the woman and child ride off with the horse, and he came back to be hanged. And, to the confusion of all those moderns who think that the fashion in morals of a decadent minority can withstand the ancestral voices of the soul, Blanco Posnet is not ashamed of what he has done. Looking round upon that court of wild men and women, he sees that, like himself, the very telling of the story has made them all go soft.

“Gosh, when I think that I might have been safe, and fifty miles away by now, with that horse; and here I am waiting to be hung up and filled with lead! What came to me? What made me such a fool? That’s what I want to know. That’s the great secret. . . . It wasn’t a man. . . . He done me out of it. . . . He means to win the deal and you can’t stop Him. . . . Boys, I’m going to preach you a sermon on the moral of this day’s proceedings. . . . I started in to be a bad man like the rest of you. . . . I took the broad path because I thought I was a man and not a snivelling, canting, turning-the-other-cheek apprentice angel serving his time in a vale of tears. . . . Why did the child die? Tell me that if you can. He can’t have wanted to kill the child. Why did He

make me go soft on the child, if He was going hard on it Himself? Why should He go hard on the innocent kid and go soft on a rotten thing like me? Why did I go soft myself? Why did the Sheriff go soft? Why did Feemy go soft? What's this game that upsets our game? For seems to me there's two games bein' played. Our game is a rotten game that makes me feel I'm dirt, and that you're all rotten dirt as me. T'other game may be a silly game; but it ain't rotten. When the Sheriff played it, he stopped being rotten. When Feemy played it, the paint nearly dropped off her face. When I played it, I cursed myself for a fool, but I lost the rotten feel all the same. . . . What about the croup? It was early days when He made the croup, I guess. It was the best He could think of then; but when it turned out wrong in His hands, He made you and me to fight the croup for Him. You bet He didn't make us for nothing, and He wouldn't have made us at all if He could have done His work without us. By Gum, that must be what we're for! . . . He made me because He had a job for me. He let me run loose till the job was ready, and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. And I tell

you, it didn't feel rotten : it felt bully, just bully. Anyhow, I got the rotten feel off me for a minute of my life ; and I'll go through fire to put it off me again. . . . There's no good and bad . . . but, by Jiminy, gents, there's a rotten game and there's a great game. I played the rotten game ; but the great game was played on me ; and now I'm for the great game every time. Amen."

Not a word more shall I say. There is nothing more to be said.

"When I think that I might have been safe, and fifty miles away by now, with that horse ; and here I am waiting to be hung up and filled with lead ! What came to me ? What made me such a fool ? That's what I want to know. That's the great secret."

That indeed is the secret. I hold that it is an open secret. I leave my case at that.

V. HERE AND THERE

The objection may be taken to these studies that we are dealing with rare and unusual personalities ; that therefore the inferences which we deduce from their behaviour *in extremis* are good only for them and are not authoritative for average human

beings. Well, there are many things to be said by way of answer or qualification to such a criticism. For example, it is surely a presumption in favour of the universality which is claimed for these tragic moods and protests, that they awaken a response in the souls of those who choose to come within hearing of them, and that when men are reduced by life to some constraint or fear, the language of great literature becomes their own natural speech. It is not claimed that all men dwell habitually among those deep things. It is not claimed even that all men have had experience of those deep things. What is claimed is that those deep things are there ; that the soul of man is capable of and liable to the vision of those depths ; and that whenever the soul has been thrown back upon itself, and shut in with itself, there are certain persistent fears which present themselves, and a certain course which offers itself as the only possible way of peace.

The deeper literature of the soul, with a unanimousness which makes it authoritative for many of us, and ought to make it worthy of consideration by all responsible people (the deeper literature of the soul), has given a name and body to those intangible things.

To say that there are many who have never had such feelings is simply to say that their great day,—that day on earth wherein the soul rehearses what its behaviour shall be before the Great White Throne,—their great day has not yet come. Or it may only mean that they have so far succeeded in escaping from any season of loneliness long enough and acute enough to bring out those lurking shapes.

Certainly it is no news to those of us who are acquainted with that great body of the literature of the soul, the Bible, to be told that all men have not these tremors and disquietudes. "All men have not faith," said St. Paul, meaning, when he wrote the words, this very thing, that all men have not this moral tenderness which keeps us soft towards God. Plato also discriminates between "royal" natures, as he calls them, natures, that is to say, which are liable to waves of contrition, and natures of another kind which, so far as we see,—but then in these matters we do not see very far, and can only see for ourselves,—live on without ever coming to a day of reckoning with themselves.

In our own day, William James of Harvard divided all souls into two classes,—souls which,

with a measure of predestination, are tough, and souls which, by an equal necessity, are tender.

It is another aspect of the greatness of Jesus that in His view the human soul in its final instincts and necessities is *one*, however certain features may have been heightened or depressed. He believed that the true and final nature of the soul is to seek, and having found, to dwell in communion with, Him whom He called "the Father." He believed that if the Father were brought to the heart of man, as He by His own unstinted life of love was bringing Him, the heart of man in every instance would respond. Not easily indeed. With great difficulty and labour rather, as happens at every new birth.

But this He did believe, and in this faith He gave Himself without reserve, that there was and is in every human being the capacity for seeing something higher than its own reach at any moment, and that, when the human spirit becomes aware of that Presence of God knocking and waiting at its own very door, there and then begins a controversy between impulses which, whatever be the issue, makes the man morally self-conscious and a party to his own fate.

Whether or not all men are ultimately liable to

the miseries which follow wrong-doing, or to the shame and sorrow which afflict souls of a certain kind when they see themselves in the light of some holier way, is a matter so serious that it is wiser not to dogmatise upon it. It must be left to ourselves one by one to say whether we have such feelings, or do not have them. It may be that once upon a time we did have them. But they do not trouble us now. In that case, we ought to ask ourselves whether we dealt honourably by them when they visited us, or whether we tampered with the delicate mechanism of our spiritual life and trampled down the secret barriers of God.

Once again it may be said that all this agonising over one's ways has lost its reason and foundation by the work, in various fields, of the scientific method. If moral grief appears to-day in literature or in life, it is a reminiscence from pre-scientific times. In short, to recall the phrase with which these studies began—"no one to-day is worrying about his sins." Well now, let me say one or two things just there.

It is probably quite true that in our day the sense of sin is much fainter than it has been ; for the sense of God may not be so strong as it has

been. The sense of sin is the shadow of the sense of God ; and a dim light casts no shadow. It is the bright shining of a light which discovers us to ourselves. It is inevitable that in a society which is without moral seriousness, the individual, if he does not summon himself each day before a higher court, will come more and more into equilibrium with his surroundings. But this is not to say that he has lost the power to feel the misery of his own way, if the higher way should be revealed to him. And besides, populous and confusing as is the general life in these days, one's soul is always distinct to itself and keeps urging its own business upon each one's attention. It is true that there are many ways by which we may for a time escape from ourselves. We may even train our mind to an extraordinary pitch of ingenuity for escaping seriousness. And yet all the time we know that we are merely evading something, we know that we are living by our wits. It is not without significance that the best-known poem of Francis Thompson should be "The Hound of Heaven." It but shows that there the poet had revealed the thoughts of many hearts.

So long as a man believes himself, he will believe in the unhappiness of wrong-doing, and he

will know precisely wherein for him wrong-doing consists. It is when we cease to believe ourselves, and begin to believe other people ; it is when we take our eyes off our own case and let them wander carelessly upon the general life ; it is when we say, " Why should I trouble myself, in this busy city where the crowds are passing to and fro, and where other people are not troubling themselves ? "—it is then and thus that we escape the very issue which bears witness to our moral worth in the world. Now the fact is that those crowds who help us to get over our own scruples are made up of individuals like ourselves, who, so far as we know, are doing precisely what we are doing, avoiding the challenge of some personal question by looking out upon what seems the fashion or custom. So long as we keep our eyes upon ourselves we feel we must decide something, whereas when we look away from ourselves and begin to speak about the spirit of the time, about progress, about enlightenment and so forth, we begin to feel that everything has already been decided, and decided in a way that falls in very happily with our own inclination.

But once again it is simply not true, if one may judge from the best writing of our own time,

that man has found a formula for the silencing of those ancient voices of the soul. Book after book has appeared in our day, where one might even say the author has tried to prove a case against the established moral habit and prejudice. He has launched a human being out upon life on some principle which is against the social tradition. And yet I know of no single case where the end is not bitterness. I know of no case in any piece of serious literature where a person, or persons, who flout the accepted morality in fundamental things, gain happiness: I mean, of course, such a happiness as they themselves can bear to think about and to look back upon. You may say, indeed, that the reason for this is, that society itself is so constituted, so hide-bound by conventionality, so timid, so insincere and hypocritical, that souls who will be free must suffer. But that is not my point. That men suffer at the hands of society is, of course, no proof that they are wrong. It may be proof that society is wrong. It is true likewise that it will only be by the faithful endurance of suffering at the hand of society that society itself will be renewed. It would be no disparagement of a life's principles that they nailed a man to a

cross; but it is a disparagement of a life's principles that they lead on to private misery, that they provoke an invincible reaction towards shame and bitterness. And that is what I find in every sincere piece of writing in which the dice are not loaded, in which, I mean to say, the writer obeys with fidelity the logic of his own imagination. The thing in the long run does not work. Not only does it not work, and will it not work, on the large scale as a social habit; it does not work in the kingdom of a man's own spirit. If you still protest that this liability to remorse, this tendency of self-seeking to leave the taste of ashes in the mouth, is simply the reminiscence in our blood of barbarous and hideous social retributions before these days of enlightenment, once again you leave the real issue untouched. For human nature is just that thing which has come down through history bearing within itself those profound and terrible susceptibilities.

But it is not enough to say that this misery which free spirits cannot escape is the reminiscence of the social penalties of earlier times, or that it is the effect of the attitude of society to-day towards one who violates its conventions.

Society has not the power to cause moral misery. Society has the power to inflict penalty ; society has not the power to make one ashamed of himself. There is a quality of misery which I alone can bring upon myself, and it arises when at length I have come within sight of a way of living which makes the way I have come seem unworthy, or cruel, or sensual, in any case intolerable.

So long as my own heart does not reproach me, so long as, in the fine speech of the Bible, I can lift up my face to God without spot, I may suffer, I may be forsaken, but, deeper than everything, I ought to be at peace, my heart should be free of even one drop of bitterness. I ought, indeed, to be contemptuous of a society or of a generation which is so blind as not to see the glory of the way which I have chosen. Suffering, indeed, is no proof that a man's life-principles are at fault ; the society which inflicts the suffering, or stands by while it is being endured, may be at fault. In such a case, the man's life-principles, though they are opposed to the principles of his day, may all the time be in harmony with the principles of a day that is coming. But misery, the taste of ashes in

the mouth, personal shame, the sense of world-weariness, these, when they follow upon some way of life, and when they arise in the human heart out of some way of life, do demonstrate that that way of life is contrary to the man's own true nature and spirit. For a way of life which destroys the very principles of human nature cannot be according to the nature of things.

"And so," I said, "Good-bye to London!" We said no more, but watched the South-side streets below—bright gleams of light and movement, and the dark, dim, monstrous shapes of houses and factories. We ran through Waterloo Station, London Bridge, New Cross, St. John's. We never said a word. It seemed to me that for a time we had exhausted our emotions. We had escaped, we had cut our knot, we had accepted the penalty. That was all settled. That harvest of feelings we had reaped. I thought now only of London, of London as the symbol of all we were leaving and all we had lost in the world. I felt nothing now but an enormous and overwhelming regret. . . . Then suddenly, stabbing me to the heart, came a vision of Margaret's tears and the sound of her voice . . . I came out of a cloud of thoughts to discover the narrow compartment with its feeble lamp overhead, and our rugs and hand-baggage swaying on the rack, and Isabel, very still in front of me, gripping some wilting red roses tightly in her bare and ringless hand.

For a moment I could not understand her attitude, and then I perceived she was sitting bent together with her head averted from the light to hide the tears that were streaming

down her face. She had not got her handkerchief out for fear I should see this, but I saw her tears, dark drops of tears upon her sleeve.

For a time I stared at her and was motionless in a sort of still and weary amazement. Why had we done this injury to one another? Why? Then something stirred within me.

"Isabel," I whispered.

She made no sign.

"Isabel!" I repeated, and then crossed over to her, crept closely to her, put my arm about her, and drew her wet cheek to mine.

So ends a great modern story. But surely this sad way is the wrong way. It is not that they are suffering which proves that they are wrong. Their chief suffering is that they know that they are wrong.

"Sail in there," cried an old admiral, when the fight had gone against him, "sail in there; for I have taken the soundings, and when they sink my ship, the flag at the mast-head will still be flying." That is the language of a man whose heart is with him in the deep waters. But "wet cheeks, silence, wilting red roses"—these are signs that their own heart has gone out of the business.

The last thing about us is that we are not alone. When we look long and deeply into

ourselves, we perceive that we stand for ever in a relation to Another, to an Absolute and close-fitting Personality. We can no more think of ourselves as quite alone and independent than we can think of space except as being surrounded by space, and of time except as surrounded by time. Whatever may be the truth in regard to other races, it is true with regard to us, that the only God with whom we have to do is the God of our fathers. We can free ourselves from the bondage of one aspect of His nature only by appealing to another aspect, which we claim as belonging still more properly to Him, more central and abiding.

I do not know how better to describe the private misery which, on the witness of all great literature, has been let loose in men's hearts by certain ways than to say, that it is the experience by us of an intolerable loneliness. We can all of us endure loneliness in one region of our life, so long as we are sustained by friendliness and belief in us, in another region deeper and more intimate. We can bear to be misunderstood by those who do not know us, so long as we are supported by the love, or, if need be, by the patience of those who know us to some depth.

And even when friends forsake us, when the one or two on whom we leaned fall away, if we can still without conscious self-deception send our soul more deeply into itself and there find comfort and no embarrassment; if, to use language concerning matters about which language fails, we can look across the frontier of our own personality and truly believe that we are not outcasts or outlaws from the Kingdom of God,—we may suffer, we will suffer, but we have not failed, and we are not unhappy. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are sons of God. But, if it is otherwise with us, if when we descend into ourselves for solace we find none; if, when we would lean upon our last Resource and make our protest from the judgment of the world to Him who knows everything, if there and then we are alone; if the Face we plead with seems to be turned away from us,—we have come, I think, upon that final silence and disapproval from which there is no appeal.

This was an idea which more than once our Lord dwelt upon. In some of His gravest words He warned men that the penalty for certain courses was not the pain which they entailed.

The true penalty was—the consequence, and that consequence was that one day they should be left out of something. It might be the society of men. It might be the friendship of those who had been dear to them. It might even be the Fellowship of God.

And the great cries of the soul in literature and in life are the cries of those who are afraid of that loneliness, or who already are tasting the bitterness of it.

VII

IS HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?—"JULIAN THE APOSTATE"

A PARALLEL

I BELIEVE that when we get far enough away from the present terrible state of things to reflect upon how it all came about, we shall perceive that what we witnessed was a deliberate attempt to find a basis other than the traditional Christian basis for human life, and the difficult overthrow of that attempt. Certainly it was as I was reading the terrifying political literature of modern Germany, its Bernhardi, and Treitschke, and, earlier and greater, its Nietzsche, and even such frank and casual *obiter dicta* as we have in Count von Buelow's *The German Empire*, that there kept coming back upon my mind the idea that I had read all this before, that once before positions of the kind had been advanced, that

once before Christianity had been rejected by the great ones of the earth, that once before the attempt had been made to remove the Christian basis from an entire Empire, and to revert to what was believed to be a manlier and more reasonable foundation; and that that attempt had dramatically failed. When, in one of those terrifying German books,—terrifying as a thing is terrifying which reappears when we were all supposing that we were done with it for ever,—I read that the world-struggle which was imminent was, in spirit, a struggle between “Corsica and Galilee,” the phrase brought clearly to my mind the parallel I had been thinking of.

I had been thinking of “Julian the Apostate.”

That word “Galilee” had brought back to my mind the fine story which is really too good not to be true: “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean,” with which, if I can order my way, I shall conclude.

This war which is upon us is too big a thing to have had a merely local and accidental origin. Of every great war we may say with St. Paul that it is not “a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the Empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world—

the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in a heavenly warfare."

What terrified the Early Church in Julian's movement is what sends the cold waves down my back as I read the literature in which, as it appears, modern Germany has uttered and reinforced her soul. The Early Church had had experience of cruel emperors and of bad people generally. But while she was suffering contempt and persecution at their hands, the Church could comfort herself by two lines of reflection. For one thing, she felt in her soul that persecution and the world's contempt were keeping the fire of her own faith clean and passionate. And for another thing, she could always say with her Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But face to face with the movement under Julian she was deprived of these resources. For Julian knew a great deal about Christianity. He thought he knew everything about it, and he did know—all that an extremely able and sensitive man may know about something in which, nevertheless, he does not believe. It was, he pretended, because he knew what Christianity was, and because he observed its influence, that he was led

to the rejection of it as a private faith, or as a basis for society on the large scale.

And again, his rejection of Christianity was something altogether different from anything the Church had experienced. Julian did not propose to persecute Christians. In fact, he did not propose to take Christianity seriously. In my own view, a man is not taking Christianity seriously who is merely prepared to tolerate it; who will even admit that it is true enough in certain cases, and for certain people, but is not the truth, is not the express will of God.

What made Julian's rejection of Christianity so unusual was, that Julian was a sincerely religious man. His gods were the old gods of Greece and Rome, the symbols of strength and beauty. That whole region in which Christianity moves—including its ideas of sin, penitence, forgiveness, pity, the spiritual advantage of poverty and weakness—all that was obnoxious to him. Had Julian been a private citizen he would probably have done nothing more than write some tracts against the entire Christian scheme—as indeed he did. Being the brilliant man he was, and an emperor to boot, the movement which he inaugurated became so thorough, its principles received such

prestige and outward expression, that the episode of Julian forms one of those recurring crises of history in which two formulas for life struggle for the mastery, and one or the other must accept defeat. In the fourth century it was Julian who was overthrown.

I take courage from the sign.

There are two views of history which have had their advocates. There is the view that strong personalities create events ; and there is the view that, on the other hand, strong personalities are themselves simply the expression of the world-spirit, the *élan vital*, the soul in things, which, blindly, or with its own intention, is for ever urging its way. There is something attractive in either theory : the truth includes both. There does seem to be an element of what we call accident in history—a man of a certain type appearing at a certain time which gave him his very stage and opportunity. And yet at the same time, when one ponders an age deeply, say the age of Napoleon, or the present crisis, one feels that for a long time forces had been gathering beneath the surface which had to find some outlet through persons and events. History is organic. There is a background and soil which give the figures

on the stage their *milieu*. Without that background the figures would be irrelevant and futile. Without those figures the background would be voiceless and featureless, like a dull sea or a desert of sand.

It is an absolutely sound thing to say that if any one element had been different in the age of Julian, everything would have been different. If the Christian Church of the fourth century had been more Christian, more unmistakable, less corrupt, Julian's movement would not have been called for. If Julian had been, in the depths of his own soul, a Christian, he would have set himself to cleanse the Augean stables, instead of blaming Christianity for the immoralities, and insincerities, and hypocrisies with which he saw it associated. As it was, he saw Constantius, his uncle, the secular head of the Church, receiving, though a murderer, honours which should be reserved for saints. But there is no end to the "ifs and ans" which we can imagine, any one of which might, we suppose, have averted this particular crisis. Just as we might speculate, with Carlyle, as to what course the history of Europe would have taken if Louis XVI. had not waited for that yellow Berline in which to escape from Paris, or

if it had not gone quite so slowly, or if a dissatisfied Frenchman had not happened to see the face of Louis through the window, and gone ahead to arrange for his apprehension. Or what course would the history of England and of America have taken if Oliver Cromwell had sailed for New England, as at one time he intended?

Interesting as such speculations are, I feel that we are secularising history when we make too much of them. Behind all those things which we call accidental we seem to be aware of something solemn and inevitable which, had this or that failed, would have found some other way of achieving substantially the same result.

Take the present crisis. Whilst we must take care how we say that war was inevitable, lest we should be understood to mean that we are all puppets in the hands of a kind of Ironical Devil, nevertheless we may say that, given certain things and certain persons, given Bismarck, and Nietzsche, and those others whom I have named, given that these men have dominated without rebuke the fluid spirit of a people, given forty years of increasing prosperity, in which their chosen principles seem never to have failed,—and it was inevitable that soon or late that

people should attempt a colossal application of the spirit and policy which had carried them thus far.

Julian challenged the nature and disposition of things as he had found them, and in the day of his overthrow he discovered that Christianity, once operative in human affairs, remains for ever a standard and rebuke. Modern Germany, on her own witness, is out to-day to assail the accepted nature and disposition of things; and I believe she also is about to learn that there are words which, having once been spoken, can never be forgotten, that there are ideas which, having for ages held sway in the name of God over man's natural wildness and excess, cannot be repudiated without bringing on a day of such darkness, that it will appear to be the end of the world, and indeed will be the end of man as we had come to know man, and, on the whole, had come to love him.

Again and again, in my reading of the literary and philosophical work which lies at the back of German political action, I have had the same feeling as I am conscious of in reading about Julian. Again and again I find myself in entire agreement with charges which Germany and

Julian alike make against things as they are. Julian hated the slovenliness and want of erectness and thoroughness amongst Christians, just as Germany hates and despises the sentimentalism and social indolence of all nations not Teutonic. Both Germany and Julian associate this indolence and effeminacy with Christianity as popularly understood. Therefore, in the case of both, their polemic against Christianity has long since got beyond the denial of the metaphysical doctrines of the faith, and beyond the denial of the claims of the personalities of the faith. They have both moved right on to the rejection of the ethic and personal habit of Christianity, as being contrary to reason and unequal to the demands of life.

Now, with much of this criticism we should all do well to agree, even though we are aware that it is based upon a misunderstanding of true Christianity. In fact, the mistake which Julian made, and which representative writers of Germany have made, is the commonplace mistake of refusing Christianity because of the low level in moral energy of an enormous number of people who profess it. Their reasoning is not so crudely expressed as this, but essentially it is not different,—that, since the Latin races, let us say, are easy-

going, sentimental, lazy, not very clean, all this is due to their traditional piety, which encourages such ways of living, which certainly does not rebuke such ways of living. Our proper attitude towards such a criticism, if we are wise, is not to say there is nothing in it, but to admit that there is a great deal in it; thereupon we ought to show, by the way we address ourselves to the removal of unworthy features, that these unworthy features are not due to our Christianity, but survive, in spite of our Christianity, the not yet transformed qualities of our hereditary human nature.

For example,—and these are the matters to which we shall attend when this war is over,—it is a shocking fact that there should be such poverty and squalor in a land like our own, in which, to say no more, the religion of Jesus, with its demand for justice as well as for pity, is the acknowledged religion of the State. But to reject Christianity because of those very things from which Christ came into the world to deliver us, is on a level with rejecting a gold currency because there are in circulation many counterfeit coins.

Julian and these German philosophers charge Christianity with ministering to certain undesir-

able human instincts, and with undermining the strength and hardihood of people. Well, we must not be astonished. George Eliot, once upon a time, said that the ethics of Jesus were effeminate ; and this although the symbol of Christianity is a cross ; and although Jesus declared more than once that in order to follow His way, it would take as much out of a man as it does to cut off your left hand with your right ; that you might be compelled to pluck out your own eye rather than go one step further on your way once known to be wrong.

The fact is, it may not be, and it is not, Christ that these men impugn, but the more-than-half worldly and accommodating and unreal thing which has been allowed to take the name of Christianity. It ought never to be possible, as it was in Julian's day, and as it must be in our day, — otherwise the thing would not have occurred,—to criticise Christianity in the name of a higher and more wholesome way of living. And the answer to all such criticism is, not to write a book in defence of Christian doctrine, or of Christian ethics in the abstract, but to manifest a life in ourselves, and as Christians to organise such a life of health and moral energy in the

State, that such criticisms shall fail because of their sheer unreality and irrelevance.

The truth is,—as every serious student of history has confessed, including the devout Catholic, Dante,—when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the State, he almost extinguished it. Constantine, whom it takes a singular want of humour to consider a Christian at all, issued the edict making Christianity the religion of Rome, in 306. Julian became Emperor of Rome in 361. And in that interval of fifty years Christianity had simply touched bottom. Constantine, wishing to use the Church for his own purposes, to make it an instrument of power, gave it wealth and privileges, thus radically transforming it. “It was no longer that religious brotherhood, composed of poor and humble people, often persecuted, without worldly influence, and content with the simple worship celebrated in obscure and private dwellings. Triumphant Christianity felt the need of imposing itself on the multitude by means of a luxury that attracts, and legends that strengthen the faith. In its evolution it profited by the spirit of the times ; in contact with paganism it became worldly, and acquired many pagan habits. Hence the pomp, the luxury, and the

numerous hierarchies that were prevalent in the fourth century. The liturgy was developed, and by means of the councils dogmas were formulated and defended with the greatest ardour. The life of the clergy and the bishops no longer resembled that of the primitive Church. It became corrupt and luxurious. Ammianus describes the bishops of the cities, who, 'enriched by the gifts of the matrons, drove around the streets, seated in coaches ; splendidly attired, and lovers of abundant banquets, surpassing those of the Imperial table.'

"As long as Christianity was compelled to use all the strength of a minority in resisting persecution, it was a powerful moral force with men and developed in them sentiments of heroic virtue. But Christianity, when victorious, rested quietly in security and peace, leaving man free to return to the indulgence of his passions and to devote to evil all the energies that were no longer engaged in the supreme combat."

It may be wrong in reason for Germany, as for Julian, to attribute to Christianity vices which are indeed contradicted by Christianity ; but the proper answer is not to dispute such logic, but to remove such facts.

What I mean by much that has gone before,

from which I now pass, is simply this, that if Christianity had been more vital, more real, more obviously mastering the minds of men, Julian the Apostate would have had no case, and the characteristic teaching of Germany, which has found its occasion in this European crisis, would never have found a hearing. It is thus that we are all to blame. We have all of us in various ways allowed men to misunderstand Christianity. Christianity does not make men prostrate. It offers to men who acknowledge themselves prostrate a basis on which to recover their self-respect. Christianity is a faith for the poor and the defeated, for the halt and maimed and blind. But its whole object is to make *men* of us all, to give us the victory over disabling things, to make the blind see, and to restore the lame to the ranks. It is a charge against Christianity which can quote many things in its support, that it has been construed as encouraging blindness for the sake of blindness, and poverty for the sake of poverty, and a suffused incompetence and imbecility as though these were the marks of the children of God.

But to proceed, let me say something more definite of Julian, who, after all, is my subject,

though I have confessed that I chose him on a pretext. He was born in the year 331 of our era. Constantine, called the Great, who almost ruined Christianity by making it the religion of the State, was his uncle. This gave Christianity a bad chance with the young man Julian. We all of us begin by taking our ideas of religion from one or two people whom we happen to know very well. It is therefore not to be wondered at that Julian suffered all his life from a perverse and uncomprehending attitude towards the Christian religion. The next Emperor, Constantius, was no better than Constantine. Constantius murdered Julian's mother. You cannot be astonished, therefore, that from the dawning of his intelligence Julian was disposed to think the worst of Christianity. Indeed, just as in the course of a long reading on Nietzsche I cannot recall his ever having met a truly good and able Christian man, but only Christian courtiers and worldly-wise men, neither can I recall any hearty and fine friendship that Julian ever had with an able and good man, who was at the same time a Christian. Both Nietzsche and Julian judged of Christianity by some wretched examples of men.

Julian was a child of genius. Even the accounts of him which we have from Gregory of Nazianzus, who was his exact contemporary, cannot conceal the Emperor's eminent and unusual qualities. He was nervous, restless, many-sided; a great soldier, who, in a brilliant campaign, overcame the Gauls, against whom Constantius had sent him in the hope that there he would find a grave. But far from that, the Gauls, whom Julian overcame, rallied to his standard, proclaimed him Emperor, and fought under his eye from that day until the day when, in the retreat from Ctesiphon, he fell under the javelin of a Persian. It is said that so resourceful and various was Julian, that he could at one moment write a report, dictate another, and listen to a third. He was a poet, a writer of essays, a priest of the gods, deeply versed in the occult. We have an account of him from Gregory, prejudiced indeed, but full of insight. It was written after the death of Julian, and when the Empire, which for a short time had withdrawn its public support from the Church, had returned to the ordinance of Constantine.

"I was not favourably impressed with the jerking motion of his neck," says Gregory, "the

shifting shoulders, the roaming eyes, that turned from one side to another, having in them something of the maniac ; the unsteady shaking feet, which seemed unable to support his weight, his nostrils dilated with pride and disdain, the lineaments of the face ridiculous and conceited, the immoderate and sudden laugh ; the gestures of assent and dissent without reason ; questions confused and irrelevant, the answers no better, intermingling the one with the other, without order or reason."

But that, I repeat, is the report of a good but properly prejudiced man. In any case, Julian died at thirty-two : so we must be charitable. Men of genius who die at thirty-two are not to be estimated by the headlines of copy-books. He was Emperor for only two years, and in that time, to say no more, he marched at the head of conquering armies from France to Persia.

The hostility to Christianity which, until he ascended the throne, he concealed, went on deepening thereafter until the end. It is difficult to see how a man of Julian's ability could be so unfair, so blind to the idealism of Christianity, so unable or unwilling to discriminate between the

hypocrisies which throve in a Church because it was fashionable and worldly, and the essence of the whole matter, which he might have found by a study of the Gospels. He was able enough and philosophic enough to discriminate between the pure ideas underlying the stories of the gods and those stories themselves. And yet I cannot find in Julian even one sentence in which he lashes professing Christians for their disloyalty to their own master,—such, for example, as I recall in the noble and pathetic words of Nietzsche: “There has been only one Christian in this world, and He died on Calvary.”

The fact is, there is a type of mind which becomes positively furious at the whole body of Christian ideas. W. E. Henley, in our own day, seems to me to have had the kind of mind I mean. They cannot, or will not,—it is the same,—see anything except a wretched cringing and cowardice in the cry for forgiveness. And anyone who confesses to this particular need becomes to them, there and then, almost nauseous, as Robert Louis Stevenson became to Henley. They cannot understand that in seeking forgiveness from God, a man, far from running away from the consequences of his actions, is trying to

face them, to stand up to them. He is not asking God to let him off. He is asking God to punish him if He will and as He will, but not to cast him away. The cry for forgiveness is really a cry for life, for energy to make amends so far as is possible for the folly of former days.

Poor Julian was to learn that even Christians had not a monopoly of vice and hypocrisy. He became lonelier as he went forward. He began, as lonely people will unless they are on guard over themselves, to be superstitious. He cultivated soothsayers. In fact, he did for Paganism what Constantine did for Christianity—he established it. And soon all the low creatures who had come in with Christianity when it became a safe and profitable thing began to pour in with Paganism, now restored to favour.

There is probably always a touch of madness in genius; and genius in an emperor is almost sure—for want of criticism and the kindly rebuke of friends—to lead on to something unsafe.

Julian began to have an obsession that he was the Messiah. He believed that he was a vessel chosen by the gods. He declared that he was guarded continually by a host of angels. It was for this reason that on his last battlefield he

refused a breastplate, and the javelin of a Persian buried itself in his side.

Before the end his bitterness against the Christians became a disorder of the mind. He boasted to an ecclesiastic that, on the termination of the war, he would treat the Christians with so much severity that the Son of the Carpenter would be unable to aid them; whereupon the ecclesiastic rejoined that the Son of the Carpenter was at that very moment preparing him a coffin—a story which shows two things : first, that Julian was becoming excited and even unworthy of himself; and second, that his hostility to the Church was already beginning to separate in the Church the dross from the gold, and to bring out brave men. The moment the Church was dethroned it began again to mount its proper throne. The Arian gang went out, with their enlightenment and their vague theology. The Athanasians, by their virtue and qualities of character, had become the leaders. And the Church, like Peter after his lapse, had recovered her great way of speaking : “ We must obey God rather than men.”

The career of Julian has more than once, even in our day, attracted the minds of thoughtful men. To men who have an eye for the play

of principles in history it will always have a fascination. Merejkowsky and Ibsen have pondered Julian. Curiously enough it was the proclamation of the German Emperor in Versailles in 1871 which set Ibsen thinking of Julian. Did Ibsen foresee that Germany, which had committed itself to certain principles, would encounter a hostility in the nature of things? Nothing is impossible to genius. At any rate, here is the story of Julian's end.

It is a great saying that he who takes the sword shall perish by the sword. Every victory which Julian gained seemed to lead on to another war. At last he invaded Persia. With infinite pains he transported a great army across the Tigris to the very walls of Ctesiphon. There the tide of prosperity failed with that awful unmistakableness which a dramatist loves to detect. The Persians would never come to a decisive battle. They hung upon the Roman flanks as old Kutuzow hung upon the flanks of Napoleon in that terrible retreat. Everything happened amiss, as when the waters came back upon the Egyptians, so that their chariots drave heavily, and God looked at them from the edge of a cloud.

At last a battle was offered and accepted. Julian, ever brave, and now recklessly brave, rushed into the midst of it. It was then that a javelin, flung pointedly at him, grazed his arm and lodged in his liver. He tried to pull it out with his naked hands, but it cut them. Ibsen tells us that the javelin which slew Julian was the very spear with which the Roman soldier had pierced the side of Jesus as He hung upon the Cross. In any case, as a fact in symbolism, Julian was slain by an instrument which had been dipped in the blood of Christ. As he lay dying he delivered a beautiful message to his henchmen. And as he died he seemed to see something in front of him, just overhead, to which, according to the record, he spoke with his last breath, saying, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean."

There is something which is not to be set aside in this recurring confession, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean," for it has the support of history. It is simply the fact that wherever enmity to Christ has become organised, and has proceeded to act strongly upon its own principles, wherever, in short, the attempt has been made to dethrone Christianity, it has failed. All sorts of things are forgiven to nations, as Christ

promised they should be—all sorts of hypocrisies and treacheries even. But the sin against the Holy Ghost, the denial of the spirit and mental type of Christianity, the reasoned repudiation of Christianity as the way and the truth and the life, the reversion to the pre-Christian and diabolical view of man's nature—*that*, on the evidence of history, has not been forgiven a people.

A nation which acts upon a reasoned rejection of the Christian way may not immediately be overwhelmed by contrary events; but in the depth of its soul it comes to perceive something which chills its heart and paralyses its arm.

EPILOGUE

IN the heart of Paris, in the Panthéon, and on the spot where in the old days stood the steps towards the altar, in the very place where transepts, nave, and chancel converge, where the lights from all quarters meet and blend, there has been erected in our day a group in plaster (one day to be marble), which, because of its dignity and seriousness, because of its background of something sublime, pathetic, indestructible, might itself have signified to the world that France was risen into newness of life.

On an immense white block stands the noble figure of a woman. On one side of her throng the spokesmen of the Revolution, their hands outstretched, passionate, threatening. On the other side, the soldiers of the Revolution, horse and foot, with fife and drum march out to war—the happy instruments of an unquestioned, unsuspected will. But it is the central Figure which controls everything, subduing to its own gravity

the thought and speech and action on this side and that. It is the figure of a woman. Her right hand leans upon a sword-hilt, the point of which rests upon the ground. With her left hand she holds in place the "*securis cum fascibus*"—the symbol of justice. It is the free spirit of the Nation; it is the general mind; it is Liberty. But it is Liberty aware now of her awful task. Unlike the eyes of her sister in the harbour of New York, which have the valour of ignorance, this one's eyes are on the ground. Here is Liberty—white, sober, anxious. Here is Liberty after a hundred years; with her eyes upon the ground, musing, aware of something missing, preparing her soul—so my mind wandered as I considered her—to return to some still-remembered loyalty, to go back, say rather, to go forward, to the shelter and security of something wiser than liberty: I mean, Faith.

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